UNIVERSITY*of*
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Raising Evelyn

An analysis of parenting through the lens of relational environmental scholarship

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Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any tertiary institution, and to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Signed

Kaseen Cook

Date: 3/11/17

Abstract

The start of this project coincided with the birth of my first child, Evelyn. Becoming a parent revealed the connectivity in and among the relationships that were being made in, and often extended beyond, our home. This connectivity is analysed here in terms of relationality, or a focus on the complex aspects of engagement among self and other. In this research project, I reflect upon my own experience using the lens of relational environmental scholarship. I propose that parenting could be a praxis informed by such scholarship.

Dualism is a central antagonist of relational environmental scholarship. This mode of relating is typified by the physical, emotional, cultural, and/or instrumental domination of one group of people, beings, or entities over another, usually to the long-term detriment of both. The Australian environmental and relational philosophers Val Plumwood, Freya Mathews, and Debora Bird Rose critique dualistic and dominating modes of relating to others, while conceptualising connective and dialogical alternatives. The philosophies and insights of these three authors become a scaffold for nurturing my own understanding of relationality.

My methodology draws upon the practices and philosophies of autoethnography, phenomenology, and hermeneutics. I narrate several revealing parenting experiences (as they pertain to particular relational themes), and textually and reflexively analyse the messy nuances of such encounters to build upon the scholarly work of Plumwood, Mathews, and Rose.

To begin my analysis, I examine Plumwood's five qualities of dualism and demonstrate the presence of dualistic logic in the parenting practice of sleep training

infants (Chapter 5). In the proceeding chapters, I build an understanding of the fine line between domination and leadership in caregiving by reflecting upon undemocratic parenting decisions (Chapter 6), unveil the ontological and epistemological grounding of relational dynamics by analysing forms of judgement in parenting (Chapter 7), and examine panpsychism in response to my daughter's friendship with a jar of lentils to question whom we value as relational kin and why (Chapter 8). In the final chapter, the synthesis, I utilise understandings gained in the previous analysis chapters to bridge the gap between theories and practices of relationality. I conclude that deep and felt engagement, motivated by love and anxiety, plays a key role in connecting concepts of relationality with relational praxis. Praxis, in this case, is not about achieving ideal outcomes with ideal concepts, or about rejecting dualism in favour of its opposite, but rather, to embrace the complexity and imperfection of relationality and to fight for connectivity, awareness, engagement, dialogue, and reflexivity through the dynamics of relational life.

Parenting, a rich and intense part of many people's lives, offers an accessible means of embodying relational ontologies and epistemologies for both parents and children. Equally, the philosophies of Plumwood, Mathews, and Rose can extend the depth of parenting philosophy (which is predominately practice focused) through their deeper analysis of the politics, metaphysics, history, ethical frameworks, and power relations which colour relationships of care.

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I would also like to thank my parents for birthing me, providing me a plentiful and adventurous childhood, and always believing that I have the power to accomplish my goals.

Last, but not least, I am thankful that Evelyn chose me to be her mum. Without her, this thesis would not have come about, and I would never have had the opportunity to be forever changed by our relationship and love for one another.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

Figure 1 - Newborn Evelyn and her new parents. Photo credit: Kaseen Cook

Don't give up! I believe in you all!

A person's a person, no matter how small!

And you very small persons will not have to die

If you make yourselves heard! So come on, now, and TRY!

(Seuss, 1954, p.47)

1.1 Question, Significance, and Intention

Muir et al (2010) proposed that how people care for each other is mirrored in how people care for the non-human world. How people care for their infants and children may likewise reflect how we care for non-human others. Parenting practices and environmental philosophies (specifically that of relationality, which is examined in this thesis), are both most often concerned with how humans situate themselves and their kin in the world. From this common focus emerge questions of how we

perceive self and others and their interconnection, how we form values that guide encounters of care, and how those values manifest in practice.

Relational thinkers can be found in disciplinary traditions such as ecophilosophy, humanistic psychology, ecopsychology, transpersonal psychology, ecofeminism, and deep ecology, as well as scholarly research on sustainability, Buddhism, and parenting practice to name a few. Here I focus on *relationality*, as it is described by Plumwood (1991), as a rejection of environmental instrumentalism and a focus on the connective and communicative aspects of self and others. Relationality is primarily ontological, in that it describes a view of the world as composed of a continuously dynamic, connective, and infinitely dimensional messy tangling of relationships among, within and thus constitutive of phenomena. Within the scope of this thesis, relationality also describes a focus on the synergy of intellectual concepts and physical practices of relating. This acknowledges that social relationships are central to the physical, mental, and metaphysical dynamics of the universe. Therefore, to address issues such as environmental crisis and social injustices, requires that we examine the relevant fundamental roots of these relationships that constitute them, including their materials, connectivity, dialogues, symbols, meanings, contexts, understandings, socio-cultural histories, and ethical frameworks. As Mathews (2017) describes of relationality:

> If dualism was a paradigm that defined entities and attributes by hyper-separation, then relationality was the key to a new, emerging paradigm that would define entities and attributes in terms of their constitutive relations with one another, retaining difference and distinctness but construing these not in terms of exclusion, hierarchy, instrumentalism, backgrounding, incorporation, or homogenization, but rather in terms of continuity (Mathews, 2017, p. 60).

The primary research question of this thesis is:

> In what ways can an analysis of parenting relationships provide a praxis for relational environmental scholarship?

This research is significant because it creates a dialogue between parenting practice and concepts of relationality that manifest in two ways:

1. Analysing (my) the experience of parenting through the lens of environmental ethics provides a means of developing a greater understanding of relationality, as well as insight into and critique of relational theories. Parenting presents a significant opportunity to analyse and understand the power dynamics, culture, ethics, and experiences that frame intense interdependent relationships within a particular context, providing new relational understandings based in lived experience.

2. It follows then, that parenting practice presents the opportunity to develop a praxis for environmental/relational scholarship, that helps to address the issue raised by Mathews (2017) that theoretical disciplines such a ecofeminism are, themselves, dualist when only defined by theories. Mathews (2017) writes:

> As long as ecofeminism continues to define itself in theoretical terms, as philosophical discourse, the consciousness of ecofeminists will arguably remain dualist, however opposed to dualism their theoretical stance might be (Mathews, 2017, p. 54).

Parenting presents a profound opportunity to develop a praxis for relational theories that questions how we are, and how we can, foster the relational qualities of new people, and how they, in-turn relate to others. Such a praxis

> may contribute to addressing environmental crisis, social injustice, and other challenges.

If that is the case, then exploring and critiquing theories of ecofeminists and other environmental philosophers through the relational practice and experience of parenting may go some way to addressing this dilemma. In this project, I will reflexively analyse my own parenting experiences in dialogue with the relational environmental scholarship of Deborah Bird Rose, Freya Mathews, and Val Plumwood to produce new insights about concepts of relationality, and to propose ways in which parenting may provide a praxis for these relational philosophies and vice versa.

In my analysis, I consider a variety of my own parenting experiences, practices, and circumstances, ranging from those that may embody dualistic logic, through to those that may support the relationality promoted by Mathews, Rose, and Plumwood. This analysis consists of four chapters: *Chapter 5: The Dualistic Logic of Sleep Training*, *Chapter 6: Negotiating Caregiver Power*, *Chapter 7: Judgement*, and *Chapter 8: Panpsychism and Parenting*.

I choose this range of themes in order to cover the breadth of relational concepts addressed by Plumwood, Mathews, and Rose. This range of themes includes identifying the culturally engrained issue of dualism (Ch. 5), unpicking the dynamics of power relations (particularly in care situations) (Ch. 6), unveiling the ethical frameworks of dualism and relationality (Ch. 7), reasoning to whom ethical frameworks apply and how they are applied (Ch. 8), and synthesising and concluding the thesis by reflecting upon the central role of engagement and its motivations (Ch. 9).

Many choices about the direction of the analysis were organic and inductive, in that, the content I planned to cover at the onset of this research, and its organisation/presentation, continually changed with my growing understandings and the knowledge available. This included many intuitive and interpretive decisions about how to progress the thesis and what themes to explore deeper. Equally, the themes I chose to address needed to provide enough depth - in both parenting and philosophical discourse - to constitute a substantial body of work without being too large in scope to fit within the limits of this PhD project. There were endless parenting stories that could have illustrated these themes in different ways, so I choose stories based on how well I felt they suited the direction of each analysis. There were many stories and other theme areas that I wish I could have included (such as a chapter on relational intimacy), but due to time and scope limits, I had to be selective.

The experiences presented in this thesis are not intended to provide a comprehensive account of parenting or to define a universal 'parent'. The point of this analysis is to demonstrate the importance of parenting as praxis for relational scholarship, and as a means of understanding complex relationships of care. The value of my narrative lies in the meanings that flow from participation in relational congress. These meanings, reflectively analysed in concert with other (scholarly and lay) literature, form understandings of parenting, relational scholarship and their common connection. My understandings evolve as I progress different themes, and so my insights in the first analysis chapter will have changed by the time I reach my last chapter. A synthesis chapter therefore follows the analysis to pull out and further refine key insights.

1.2 Ontological and Epistemological Grounding

My child, Evelyn, was born on May 28th 2013, and without our amazingly rich relationship and my subsequent experiences of parenting, I would have never considered parenting as a significant focus for exploring relationality and its application. Motherhood has challenged the way I relate to others, and the way I view cultural practices and values. It has even changed the way I view my own childhood, assumptions about life and interdependency, and my resulting life course.

My PhD journey officially began in December 2012. I wanted to dig more deeply into the relational ideas within environmental discourses, but how? From the inspiration of Rose's ethnographic work (Rose, 2005), I initially considered investigating lived relational environmental philosophies with an Australian Aboriginal case study. Once I began my PhD, I realised that researching, experiencing, and understanding an Aboriginal case study was beyond my capability. I became a little unstuck looking for the right way to further an understanding of relationality. By this stage, I was coming to the end of my pregnancy and I went on maternity leave for eight months feeling a bit lost and hoping for some inspiration over my break.

Pregnancy, birth, and parenting launched me into a new culture and a very intense relationship of care. It was not until I contemplated returning to study, and possibly being separated from Evelyn, that I realised the significance of our relationship within the philosophical and practical reaches of relationality. I was becoming disillusioned with mainstream attitudes towards children and deeply involved in

streams of gentle parenting. Many of the principles of these new (to me) parenting philosophies resonated with the qualities of relational scholarship, such as concepts of respect, power, dialogue, and like-mindedness. I wondered if parenting, a very profound care-giving relationship, may provide opportunities for greater relational understanding, as well as a practical means of applying relational scholarship through parenting practice.

In order to approach such a complex and context specific relationship, I adopted an interpretive and relational ontological position. As someone trained in science, this was a challenge, but a very liberating and opening process of questioning my scientific compulsions. To begin this process, I first became aware of 'knowing'. How do we know? Why do we know? This is what I reasoned: We know the world through the senses of our body. That knowing is then processed through routes of consciousness – logical, innate, creative or other; we interpret and value knowing to further personal and interpersonal intentions. Knowing enables survival, and much of what we know to survive is not objective. It's relational, it's complicated, and it's experienced and interpreted. Even authors like Keller (1983) have described how the genetic scientist McClintock created a meaningful friendship with corn cells in order to further her understanding of them. In the following passage, McClintock describes her relationship to Keller:

> When I was really working with them I wasn't outside, I was down there. I was part of the system. I was right down there with them, and everything got big. I even was able to see the internal parts of the chromosomes – actually everything was there. It surprised me because I actually felt as if I were right down there and these were my friends. (Keller, 1983, p.117)

Knowledge occurs within the context of the meaning people ascribe to it. If a computer performs a statistical analysis and the scientist does not interpret it, does it *mean* anything? In this understanding, existence and knowing requires consciousness. Throughout my scientific upbringing I never questioned why researchers were superficially distanced from the knowing generated by their work. How can that distance be truly objective when the value of science depends upon how it's interpreted? Numbers do not constitute knowing on their own, and thus even science must be, in part, an interpretive system created for the purposes of furthering and understanding various manifestations of reality. Science is just one of many routes for generating information that requires a certain degree of belief and acceptance in a particular epistemological (in this case, scientific) process – a religion of sorts, with a particular set of values and practices (Mathews, 2011). With this line of thought, scientific and objective ways of 'knowing' blurred into the background with other forms of knowledge. Science is just another way of knowing the world, no more or less important than any other way. Therefore, relational understandings are valuable in their own right.

This interpretive position acknowledges the subjective and context-specific nature of knowledge, as well as the multiplicity of understandings that it generates (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Flood, 2010). Furthermore, given that I am drawing upon personal experience to develop my understandings, a constructivist epistemology is consistent with my aims. This view of knowledge generation allows for many different ways of 'knowing' experience. Evidence of experience is a social construct, therefore this research does not produce single 'truths' or answers (Ellis et al, 2011; Ferrarello, 2012). This research presents understandings - my understandings - about my experiences of parenting within the context of furthering understandings and

praxis of relationality. These understandings are intended to add to the great discourse devoted to understanding who we are - they aren't right or wrong - they just are. At its base, this project is a synergy of the relational ontology and epistemology of both parenting and relational scholarship.

Additionally, in this thesis I will utilise the terms 'environment' and 'nature' as they are utilised by Plumwood, Mathews, and Rose throughout their literature. I recognise that these terms are contradictory to an ontological position that views the world as seamlessly connective. It can be necessary to use these terms to describe intellectualised parts of the whole (or existing specialised areas of thought, such as environmental philosophy) or to refer to cultural ideas which may segregate 'environments' and 'nature' as a category of others. The use of the term 'environment' also helps to locate this thesis within schools of thought such as ecofeminism, environmental humanities, and environmental philosophy, rather than just free-floating amongst vast relational discourses.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

Forms of oppression from both the present and the past have left their traces in western culture as a network of dualisms, and the logical structure of dualism forms a major basis for the connection between forms of oppression.

(Plumwood, 1993, p. 2)

2.1 Introduction

The theories of relationality which ground this thesis assume and accept that all matter is connective and seamless, including those theories which I evidence here in my narratives of parenting practice. While relational thinking is applicable to many different social, environmental, and economic fields, I will focus my analysis in reference to the Australian philosophers Deborah Bird Rose, Freya Mathews, and Val Plumwood who also assume the continuous connectivity of matter. These three authors have inspired the themes that I aim to develop and explore in my analysis, such as ecofeminism, the metaphysics of connectivity, subjectivity, oppression and leadership, relational politics, values, and ethics within Australian contexts. All three scholars offer different perspectives and interests within the realm of environmental concerns, but their philosophies are highly interrelated through their common relational ontological positions, critiques of dominant world-views, and recognition of dualisms of oppression within relationships. Rigby (2006) and Swain and Smart (2014) describe Plumwood, Mathews, and Rose as significant voices in the

development of relational philosophy and environmental scholarship. In this chapter, I provide an introduction to the works of Plumwood, Rose, and Mathews, and so identify the philosophical niche in which this thesis is situated.

2.2 Val Plumwood

Australian Val Plumwood was an ecofeminist whose work heavily influences this research process and thesis. Many ecofeminists sought to move beyond the eco-centric and/or androcentric views of schools of thought such as deep ecology and environmental ethics, and cultivate a more inclusive, mutual, and caring way of resituating people (physically, socially, and mentally) into ecology (Plumwood, 1991; 1993; Warren, 1990; 1993). In 1975, Rosemary Radford Ruether wrote in the book *New Woman/New Earth* (Ruether, 1975), that both feminism and environmentalism are troubled by societies of domination, and so share a common cause (Ruether, 1975; Warren, 1993). Ecofeminsists, while individual and diverse in their particular philosophies, share the perspective that there are important connections between the oppression and domination of women and the oppression and domination of the environment. This connection highlights the underlying social origins of these crises that require deeper and more serious consideration (Plumwood, 1986; 1991; Warren, 1990).

Different ecofeminists evidence the domination of women and its links to environmental degradation in different ways. For instance, some use historical accounts of patriarchal cultures such as colonialism or the ascent of science, while others evidence value dualisms with male biases such as male-orientated hierarchies.

Some ecofeminists utilise empirical evidence to demonstrate that environmental destruction causes an unequal burden of suffering for women, children, poor, and minority races, while other scholars evidence the symbolic devaluation of women in cultural expression such as art, religion, politics, and literature (Plumwood, 1986; 1991; 1993; Warren, 1990; 1993). Some streams of ecofeminism view all that encompasses being female (the female body, childbirth, mothering, and care taking, for example) as intimately and literally, rather than just culturally, linked to nature, and in turn see all that encompasses masculinity as being linked to artifice, intellectual reasoning, and domination (Plumwood, 1986; 1991; 1993; Warren, 1990; 1993).

Some ecofeminists believe that women have a strong and privileged role to play in reconnecting people with non-humans (Archambault, 1993; Warren, 1990). As Plumwood (1993) reflects, sometimes the links between 'nature' and the feminine are flattering (such as a vision of a glorified 'earth mother'), and sometimes they are derogatory (such as women being viewed as primitive and incapable of intellectual thought). Sometimes even the masculine is likened to nature (as in a wild, powerful, and rugged man) and logic to woman (as in the organised, multi-tasking, homemaker). Regardless of whether connections with nature are framed positively or negatively (or even as male or female), Plumwood (1993) asserts that most of these distinctions attribute power and mastery to the masculine and being power-less and subservient to the feminine. As Plumwood (1993, p. 7) describes:

> For usually this state is seen as a beleaguered one, surviving against the hostile intent of men, who control a world of power and inequality, of military and technological might and screaming poverty, where power is the game and power means domination of both nature and people. Feminist vision often draws the contrasts starkly – it is life

> versus death, Gaia versus Mars, mysterious forest versus technological desert, women versus men. (Plumwood, 1993, p. 7)

Privileging women to reconnect people with ecology is strongly criticised as being essentialist because it asserts that male and female are fixed concepts, that the presumed association between women and 'nature' is innate, and that man's disconnect from 'nature' is also fixed (Carlassare, 1994). Such a philosophy about the connections between gender and 'nature' lack openness about the potential for people – regardless of gender – to resituate themselves with non-humans. It also serves to reinforce dualistic and oppositional divisions based on the distinctions of male/female, reason/emotion, and human/nature which many ecofeminists, such as Plumwood, were trying to move beyond.

Plumwood (1991, 1993) discusses the role of rationalism in the enablement of dualistic practices and cultural paradigms. Reasoning, in the most basic sense, describes the ability of a being to plan and make decisions based on the available knowledge (Hawkins, 2009; Mathews, 2017). Rationalism is reasoning and theories immersed in agendas of mastery, which rides on the back of the rise of scientific authority (Mathews, 2017; Plumwood 1991, 1993). Rationalism endears a mindset which is steeped in patriarchal history, and champions the powerful side of dualisms such as mind over matter, reason over emotion, human over nature, masculine over feminine, and so on. Rationalism universalises and simplifies relationships, and asserts the moral righteousness of the master (Plumwood, 1991, 1993). As Plumwood (1991) suggests, rationalism is the key to linking environmental ethics with other ethical discourses (such as feminism, or in the case of this thesis, parenting practice), because rationalism is evident in broader issues

of instrumentalism, the human self, and ethnocentric concepts of morality. Plumwood criticises traditional environmental ethics as just another form of rationalism, because it dictates to whom ethical treatment should be generously granted. Rather, Plumwood (1991) suggests ethics should take a dialogical and open form which is not grounded in rational and dualistic justifications for engagement with non-humans.

While Plumwood echoes the criticisms of postmodernists who deconstruct the power relations of dualisms – sifting out and defining the oppressive and dominating aspects of dualistic thinking and conceptual binaries – she argues that these thinkers do not go far enough (Plumwood, 1993). They reflect rationalist perspectives that the 'problem' can simply be identified and removed (Plumwood, 1993; also see Mathews, 2017). Such postmodernists focused on rejecting, breaking down, and resisting the power structures of dualism and their conceptual frameworks, but they did not fully recognise the need to heal the divisions left in the wake of dualism (Mathews, 2017; Plumwood, 1993). Notably, there is the risk that attempting to reconstruct and integrate marginalised groups and worldviews would just exchange one kind of power relation and theoretical position for another that may be just as oppressive, exclusionary, and essentialist, such as by rejecting patriarchy and privileging females and femininity to reconnect people with 'nature' (Mathews, 2017; Plumwood, 1993).

To counter the social and environmental degradation caused by engrained attitudes of domination and mastery, and achieve the reconciliation which the deconstructive postmodernists averted, Plumwood suggested that modern science and philosophy should focus on re-situating the human with continuity - in ecological and relational

terms through scholarship in communication and ethics (Plumwood, 1991, 1993). Bannon (2009) summarises Plumwood's three philosophical properties for facilitating concepts of relationality as: attributing mind-like qualities to nature, viewing nature as self-governing, and becoming sensitive to place. Plumwood argues that a mind-like approach to ecological relationships will help people to see the qualities of themselves within social and material others, dissolving dualistic thinking and illuminating opportunities for communicative and mutually beneficial relationships (Bannon, 2009; Plumwood, 1991, 1993). Bannon (2009) supports Plumwood's relational concepts, but also suggests that the deliberate conception of humans unified with nature (one with a planned ending) is an unlikely solution to environmental crisis, and suggests a more fluid and evolving relational ontology.

Plumwood's most significant and detailed theoretical works include *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (1993) and *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason* (2002). In the former, Plumwood (1993) provides an overview and critique of ecofeminism, acknowledging the ontological connection between different arenas of domination, but maintains that women should not be privileged as ecological saviours as this would pose yet another oppositional dualism. A significant contribution is her detailed conceptualisation and deconstruction of dualism. This includes its cultural and ecological significance and its five characteristics – denial (to deny interdependence with the oppressed), hyperseperation (to ensure physical and psychological disconnection between the oppressed and oppressor), instrumentalism (to view the oppressed as a tool to achieve the ends of the oppressor), backgrounding (also called relational definition, describes the contrasting qualities of the oppressed as flaws), and homogenisation (to promote all members of the oppressed as the same, usually in a derogatory or stereotypical way) (see Chapter

5.4, page 100, for a detailed description and analysis of these five characteristics). She argues that dualisms of opposition and oppression such as mind/body, male/female, and human/nature facilitate the dominance of one body over the other, to the material benefit of the dominator and to the severe expense and oppression of the other (Plumwood, 1991, 1993, 2008). Dualistic power systems mask and/or distance the connections between players, and so the long-term outcome of a dualistic power struggle is usually a problem for all players.

In her final analysis, Plumwood (1993) offers a critique of deep ecology, an ecological movement pioneered by Arne Naess. In 1973, Arne Naess published the article *The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement* (Naess, 1973), in which he first describes the fundamentals of deep ecological thinking. He proposed that ecological issues were far deeper than merely those of pollution and resource maintenance to sustain the privileged few (the 'shallow movement'). Deep ecology also resonates with many of the principles of Buddhism, such as asserting that material attachment is a source of suffering for self and others (and should thus be transcended), as well as sharing a holistic ontological position (Gregory and Sabra, 2008; Khisty, 2006). Other significant scholars in deep ecology include George Sessions, Bill Devall and Warwick Fox (Drengson et al, 2011; Humphrey, 2000; Khisty, 2006).

This school of thought is criticised by Plumwood (1993) as being wilderness-centred, privileging the position of non-humans, and unintentionally reinforcing the duality that separates human from nature. Plumwood (1993) contends that deep ecology reacts to relational separation and disconnect with equally dualistic and idealised concepts of interconnectedness, sameness, and holism which deny the differences of

individuals. Failure to acknowledge the diverse subjectivity of relationality and the diverse perspectives and values of others (humans and non-humans alike) hinders the potential for deep ecology to embrace people as an integral part of ecology (and ecology as an integral part of people) in a way that could be mutually nourishing. Likewise, Plumwood (1991) also asserts that the deep ecological concepts of *self,* such as indistinguishability, expansion of self, and transcendence, are essentialist and dualistic. These concepts not only discount the diversity of different relating subjectivities, but negate the self-interested boundaries that support reciprocal relationships, and remove the agency and engagement of people in relationships with non-human others.

Plumwood's second book, *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason* (2002) extends the themes of her first book, including her critique of dominant cultures. Its most important contribution to this research is the suggestion that material spirituality offers an epistemology and ontology that is interconnected within place, rather than seeking to transcend it:

> We have the option to ask for little in the way of a separate individual essence that persists after death, but be satisfied with a materialist spirituality which recognises that spirit is not a hyper-separated extra ingredient but a certain mode of organisation of a material body (Plumwood, 2002, p. 223).

Plumwood asserts that this spiritual concept of being allows for the agency of people in the world, which in turn awakens people to the mindfulness of others whom we can engage in dialogical relationships. From such dialogue

and engagement grows, what Plumwood calls, an interspecies communicative ethic. This complex phenomenon is not an abstract concept, but a practice still persisting in certain cultures (such as in American and Australian indigenous examples). This ethic extends to include an understanding of political solidarity with non-human others:

> [A]n appropriate ethic of environmental activism is not that of identity or unity (or its reversal indifference) but that of solidarity – standing with the other in a supportive relationship in the political sense (Plumwood, 2002, p. 202).

My thesis mirrors the core argument of ecofeminists such as Plumwood – how we treat our fellow humans, especially the ontological and epistemological grounding of those relationships, is seen in how we are situated with ecological others. Relationships in the home are important to environmental discourses because they play a significant role in 'making people', including shaping this ontological and epistemological grounding.

Ecofeminism – particularly Plumwood - is important to my work because it helps me to understand dualism and its embedded qualities, with which I can reflexively search for dualisms within my own assumptions and experiences of parenting. Indeed, if dualism permeates an individual's world in a multitude of ways we have yet to fully comprehend, then dualism would be likely to surface in many different relationships, including parenting. As such, Plumwood can also help me to decipher the significance and meaning of dualism in parenting, and provide some direction to understanding a parent's role as a leader rather than a master.

Davison (2001) highlights that although Plumwood provides a deep understanding of relationality; she does not provide any practical or tangible means of how such concepts may be practised. Parenting could offer a means of not only road-testing concepts of relationality through messy everyday parenting experiences, but of embodying such relational philosophies from infancy.

2.3 Freya Mathews

While Plumwood considered relationality from an ethical and political angle, Freya Mathews' body of work approaches the philosophies and practices of relationships from a metaphysical perspective. Both strive to understand a world of complex, dialogical, and subjective relating. In particular, they both value the meanings, discourses, manifestations, and unity of concepts of self and other.

Mathews' work is situated within the environmental humanities, which is a contemporary branch of ecological thinking that aims to resituate people within a diverse world and incorporates many different sub-disciplines. Her work also compliments aspects of ecofeminism, such as critiques of dualism and culture, and touches upon aspects of spiritual discourse. As Rose et al (2012) describes:

> […] the environmental humanities can be understood to be a wide ranging response to the environmental challenges of our time. Drawing on humanities and social science disciplines that have brought qualitative analysis to bear on environmental issues, the environmental humanities engages with fundamental questions of meaning, value,

> responsibility and purpose in a time of rapid, and escalating, change (Rose et al, 2012, p.1).

Mathews, in her first book publication *The Ecological Self* (1991), launches her analysis of contemporary visions of interconnectedness and self. This text begins to unpack the metaphysical aspects of environmental crisis, and moves beyond the material discourses of contemporary environmental scholarship.

Mathews (2003), *For Love of Matter: A Contemporary Panpsychism* extends the argument that the world is far more than inert material to be measured by science, but is a communicative hive of dialogue (Mathews, 2003; Rigby, 2006). Mathew's employs a reflexive narrative of her experiences of metaphysical phenomena such a love (of a childhood place), and how they demonstrate the interlaced and non-material dimensions of self and other. She uses the term panpsychism to describe the "inner psychic" (Mathews, 2003, p. 27) property of all matter. For Mathews, panpsychism is an ontological position; a specific means of *viewing* the world relationally, which is both based in, and has ramifications for, encounters with others. Within this realm of thought, the universe becomes saturated in infinite centres of subjectivity – each one unique, external to all others (for example, I'll never know what it is like to be you or any other centre of subjectivity), yet connective and communicative. The value of panpsychism is not as a scientific fact or material reality, but as a metaphysical and subjective experience which has ramifications for the ethics of relationality (how we justify the value we ascribe to others), linking the metaphysical work of Mathews and the ethical work of Plumwood.

Reinhabiting Reality: Towards a Recovery of Culture (Mathews, 2005) is the sequel to *For Love of Matter* (Mathews, 2003) and considers a modern praxis for panpsychism. She argues that *culture* represents the way in which humans engage with the world, and is thus important to the practice and value of panpsychism. She argues that traditional environmental management views others as in need of management and improvement, but rather people should just 'let things be' (also see Mathews (2004)). To 'let things be' implies that people allow relationships to unfold along their own timeline and in their own fashion (without necessarily removing themselves from the relationship), which includes not imposing conceptually imagined and disconnected ends on others. As Mathews describes:

> This is the distinction between what happens when things are allowed to unfold in their own way, or run their own course, and what happens when, under the direction of abstract thought, agents intentionally intervene to change that course of events for the sake of abstractly conceived ends of their own. […] From the point of view of this distinction then, nature might be understood as whatever happens when we, or other agents under the direction of abstractive thought, let things be, while artifice is what happens when such agents redirect events towards their own ends. The radical environmental injunction to live with rather than against the grain of nature then translates into an injunction to *let things be* (Mathews, 2004, n.p. online content).

She further builds on her understandings of culture through several different narratives describing the process of inhabiting places. Mathews (2010) expands upon these themes of panpsychism with a particular interest in resolving the metaphysical controversy between science and religion by demonstrating that spirit is intrinsic to all matter.

In later work, Mathews (2006) uses the term ‘synergy’ to describe a post-materialist situation where both people and others are adaptively transformed by human encounters. These transformations do not detract from the consistent connective patterns of the players, and Mathews (2006) describes three types of human modality: pre-material - religious people guided by mystical beings, material - instrumental people driven by mastery and benefit, and post-material - spiritual people who creatively connect and shape their existence with other beings without pre-determined ends (e.g. synergise). Mathews contends that post-material cultures have yet to exist in practice, because people have yet to look beyond science and the supernatural to embrace the inner subjectivity of matter in a way that translates to modalities of culture and ways of being in the world.

Mathews (2008) extends the concept of synergy to discuss how people may relate synergistically on larger epistemological scales. She draws upon the Daoist arts of China to cultivate her thesis. Creativity and creation is presented as a means of engagement with the inner subjectivity of ‘nature’ and of expanding the world:

> If people could be exposed in childhood to the kind of experiences that would result in their becoming imprinted with the inner organisational dynamics of nature, then there would produce a society of creative individuals whose activities in every field of praxis would be consistent with, and tributary to, the unfolding of nature. There would be no need for ‘environmentalism’ in such a society, because there would be no ‘environment’ distinct from humankind – no ‘nature’ ‘out there’ – but a pattern of Creation animating human agency as reliably as it animates nonhuman agency. We would be co-creating it in everything we did (Mathews, 2008, p. 57).

As Mathews' points out, the embodiment of the 'inner organisational dynamics of nature' in childhood has practical reaches for environmental scholarship, which synchronises with the focus of my research.

2.4 Deborah Bird Rose

Deborah Bird Rose, like Mathews, is situated mainly in the environmental humanities discourse. Aligning with many of the critiques of modernity and domination made by Plumwood and Mathews, Rose has furthered the aspiration of the environmental humanities to resituate non-humans within our cultural and ethical processes (and vice versa) through anthropological approaches and experiences. Rose's work is valuable to my research as it brings unique insights to relationality from her ethnographic experiences living and working with groups of Australian Aboriginals.

In her book, *Dingo Makes us Human* (Rose, 1992), she explores life, lessons, and culture with the Yarralin people in the Victoria River Valley region of the Northern Territory. She provides deep insight into the practical and cultural significance of panpsychist paradigms to survival and wellbeing in place, thus linking Rose's work to that of Mathews.

Rose (2005) draws from her time with the Yarralin people, and offers a lived example of ecological relationships described as providing 'recursive tangled benefits'. These benefits, such as the provision of food and goods, were exchanged among the Aboriginal people of the Victoria River Valley and the non-human beings in their local environment (Rose, 2005). The Indigenous 'philosophical ecology'

born from this observed phenomenon is simply described as: "[…] the life of most living things is for others as well as for itself." (Rose, 2005, p.296). The Yarralin people's survival was hinged on how they conceptualised the significance of social and material relating and passed these philosophies on to the next generation – fluid and evolving intergenerational philosophical ecologies. Perhaps the Yarralin people are aware of a dynamic social and ecological consciousness, yet can also conceptualise the boundaries of people and others for the purposes of communicating philosophical ecologies to other people (Rose, 2005; 2008).

Rose (2002; 2008) also contributes to an understanding of how people may dialogically engage with non-human others. She expands upon the work of Mathews (1991) – that the self is embedded in the cosmos – to also describe the self as 'permeable' and 'dialogical', or that the matter of place permeates the body (such as food) and that the matter of the body permeates place (such as wastes of the body) (Rose, 2002). Such an understanding has implications for how we contextualise and perceive our dialogues with the multitude of seen and unseen places which traverse our bodies. Rose (2008) describes the ways in which her Yarralin teacher Jessie fits into tangled webs of relation in country, providing a narrated account of how a person, within the bounds of culture, may synergise with the non-human in a way that supports the thriving of many beings.

Rose's scholarship on place-based relationality reminds me that we know of the complexity of our philosophical ecologies when we experience them in real time. Second hand, communicated knowledge, can't replace experience, and it can't replicate its time/space uniqueness and complexity. This is why it is essential to consider people-in-the-world by reflecting on the experienced nuances of our own

lives. You may need to be fully present in mind, body, and spirit within the 'recursive tangled benefits' in order to begin to grasp relationships messy nuances, real-time ebb and flows, and how complex lives will progress into the future. Rose's work demonstrates that philosophies of relating have a practical purpose, and that they come in two parts; the simple part that one can conceptualise and communicate, and the lived part, which requires mindful presence.

2.5 Conclusion

This thesis is situated within the political and moral focuses of Plumwood, the metaphysical and material philosophies of Mathews, and the experiential and anthropological insights of Rose. In the opening chapter of my analysis, I will draw upon Plumwood's (1993) descriptions of dualism to give me a foundation for understanding the characteristics of embedded themes of dualism in parenting practice. Plumwood's (1991; 1993) critiques of deep ecology will help me to further understand the synergy of self and other, while Plumwood (2002) will provide relational knowledge about solidarity with non-humans, and give me a greater understanding of how to provide leadership amongst unequal participants.

As my analysis progresses, Mathews (2003) will illuminate the historical importance of the Christian story of Original Sin (including moral, social, and cultural implications) in fostering cultures of domination. I will utilise both Mathews' (2003; 2011) and Boyce's (2014) analysis of the implications of the story of Original Sin in order to understand the role of judgement, morality, and ethical frameworks in parenting and relationality. Rose (1991, 2005) supports these arguments, and

provides me with an example of morality in the Yarralin group of Australian Aboriginal people, which will then facilitate my understanding of the functionality of open-ended ethics.

In my concluding analysis chapter, the work of all three scholars will help me to understand who we deem worthy of ethical consideration and why. Mathews (2003; 2005; 2010) provides an understanding of consciousness and culture through the concept of panpsychism, which is utilised by Plumwood (1991; 2003) as a justification for an inclusive ethic (a concept I will critique). Additionally, Rose (1992; 2002; 2005; 2008) provides supportive examples of how people practice, live, and communicate concepts of panpsychism, and as such, reveal the value of panpsychism to a culture of being-in-the-world. Her examples of functional panpsychism from the Yarralin culture highlight the importance of storytelling and engagement in the continuing value of such theories, and inspire praxis through parenting practice.

At the end of my thesis, it is Mathews (2003) who encourages and promotes the value of encounter over knowledge in order to bridge the gap between theories of relationality and relational practices. Encounter, and its visceral experiences, will synthesise the themes of this thesis and provide routes of praxis through parenting.

While ecofeminism and its themes of domination synergise with aspects of parenting culture and practice, and it features heavily in some areas of my analysis, this analysis also broadens to include more recent discourse in the environmental humanities and relational ontologies more generally. Relationality, while championed by Rose, Plumwood, and Mathews, has elsewhere been rather neglected. Theories of relationality dangle in the background of different analyses of social and

environmental relationships, but are not often questioned, defined, or analysed neither directly nor practically – especially as it relates to the significance of messy, everyday living. This thesis adds a much needed practical approach to the academic work of the ecological humanities, environmental philosophy, and ecofeminist disciplines, while expanding the reach of existing scholarship.

Chapter 3 Main Streams in Western Parenting Discourse

It's not our job to toughen our children up to face a cruel and heartless world. It's our job to raise children who will make the world a little less cruel and heartless.

(Knost, 2013, no page number)

3.1 Introduction

As previously introduced, Mathews (2008) suggests that if children were exposed to the inner dynamics of world (or 'nature' as she also describes it), then such people might be more capable of co-creating the world synergistically with others. The conception of a new person marks the physical entrance of a new subjectivity, and so begins the life-long and challenging process of growing as a social, material, and perhaps spiritual being. Caregivers orchestrate and modulate the mental, physical, sensory, communicative, and responsive landscape of their infants – they teach, impose, guide, and model how to be 'people in the world'. While every caregiver and child will have a unique relational experience, many of the concepts, values, and practices which infiltrate their relationship will be informed by social and cultural sources. Dominant cultural norms are particularly influential in shaping parental relationships, especially if they played a significant role in the caregivers own upbringing (Campbell and Gilmore, 2007; Simons et al, 1991; Thornberry et al, 2003).

In this chapter, I will explore concepts of childhood, including a range of parenting styles and practices relevant to the parenting period that my experiences and this thesis are situated. I will focus on parenting traditions that are relevant to western cultures (such as Australia, the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States), because this is the cultural landscape that my autoethnography is set within. Similarly, western cultures are targeted by Rose, Mathews, and Plumwood as centres of dualistic logic, so it would seem reasonable to focus on parenting phenomena in these regions.

3.2 Childhood

Durkheim (2005) describes childhood has a period of time between birth and approximately seven to twelve years old (depending on context), defined by the rapid growth of the individual person in mind and body. Childhood, though, is much more than a mere biological condition, but a social construct bedded in culture, time period, social relationships, gender, social class, and ethnicity among many other variables (Cunningham, 1995; Hendrick, 1997; James and Prout, 1990; Jared et al, 1998).

The ideas adults have about childhood may vary greatly from the ideas children have about themselves, which will also differ from a person's lived experience of childhood (Cunningham, 1995). Cunningham (1995) writes that the evidence that remains of the concepts and experiences of childhood over the past 500 years lacks descriptions of how children experienced childhood in their own words, as well as lacks any insight into the intimacy shared between children and their parents. Furthermore, similar cultural definitions and traditions of childhood can have

different expressions in different contexts (Cunningham, 1995). Childhood, then, is a complex mix of the unique qualities, ideas, and experiences of the individual in early life, shaped by the cultural and environmental landscape with which they live. Thus, childhood could constitute an infinite variety of forms, and is not universal (Hendrick, 1997).

How childhood is conceptualised can reflect the deeper attitudes that societies have towards others, such as women, other races, animals, landscapes, and the like. For example, in addition to describing childhood as an age of growth, Durkheim's (2005) definition further argues that childhood is:

> […] the period in which the individual, in both the physical and moral sense, does not yet exist, the period in which he is made, develops and is formed (Durkheim, 2005, p.25-26).

Such definitions of childhood, common in western contexts, suggest that children are unworthy of 'existence', and reveal underlying threads of rationalism and duality. In these mindsets, people are regarded as incomplete until they reach a predetermined age, implying that the adult is completed, unchanging, and ideal. Viewing children as less-than-adult-others, as *becoming* rather than *being*, particularly in a moral sense, creates a situation where adults can validate instrumental actions against children in order to 'complete' them. In so doing, those with power can justify a different set of moral obligations toward children, paving the way to normalised childhood oppression (Rose (L.), 1991). Even the term 'childish', meaning silly and immature, is used with negative connotations. An adult may be defined as a person who has cast away the undesirable weakness and perceived short-comings of one's early life, in exchange for rational and logical qualities, as well as greater strength and power.

Cunningham (1995) observes that the development of key ideas about childhood (glimmered in the definition above) in the Western paradigm, coincided with the escalation of Western imperialism and domination of other ethnicities, beings, and landscapes in the 18th century. The introduction of child labour laws and compulsory schooling for young children in 1870's Britain redefined childhood as a time when children are innocent, asexual, vulnerable, and considered in terms their sentimental and emotional value (Hendrick, 1997). The domain of children shifted from farms and factories to homes, schools, and places of play. Rose (1991) writes that the child labour reforms in 1870's Britain gave the appearance of protecting children by curbing the horrors of child labour in factories, and instead shifted them to educational intuitions. Compulsory schooling merely swapped one type of oppression for another, as school children were forced into the new emerging identity of childhood, often with physical abuse, to make them more controllable, obedient, and productive (Rose, 1991).

With this new emerging identity of childhood, came a greater recognition of children as the future of nations, and thus created pressure to give children a 'proper' childhood – even if individual children needed to be pushed into those moulds through school programs, social groups, welfare initiatives, and the justice system (Hendrick, 1997). This increased focus on the value of children and childhood also became a focus of the growing scientific paradigm, which examined and attempted to simplify, order, and 'fix' aspects of childhood to suit new ideals and visions for the future (Hendrick, 1997).

3.3 The Rise of Scientific Parenting

In the 20th and now 21st centuries, scientific understandings of parenting played a significant role in informing mainstream parenting practices and styles (Apple, 1995; Faircloth, 2010). As Apple (1995) describes, the science of parenting gained momentum between 1890 and 1950 in regions like North America, Europe, and Australia, where parents were increasingly obliged to seek and follow expert medical and scientific advice to raise healthy children. Apple (1995) observed that parents were solely responsible for their children's upbringing, yet their instincts were devalued and replaced with medical and scientific directives. Some classical examples of this transition include the increase in physician advised formula feeding, and the treatment of birth as a medical condition requiring hospitalisation and routine intervention. The shift towards trust in science and medicine also brought profits for those selling scientifically formulated products and services (Apple, 1995). Scientific parenting was disseminated through forums such as advertisements in magazines, physicians, baby care manuals, and government pamphlets. Science also provided all sorts of accessible devices and products (like washing machines, televisions, supermarkets, and cars) that changed the context of parenting, and reduced the labour associated with some aspects of parenting.

In the past 20 years, science has also been used to help internalise parenting choices and justify a particular parenting identity. For example, Faircloth (2010) writes that mothers who breastfed into early childhood (contrary to cultural norms) called upon the authoritative knowledge of breastfeeding scholarship to justify their choice as the 'healthiest' and exempt it from debate and controversy. Rather than science dictating

parenting, science, in this instance, has helped to reinforce broader identities, philosophies, and values as 'right, best, and true'.

Similarly, Montesi and Bomstein (2017) identify that entrance into contemporary motherhood and its predicaments motivates information seeking and identity formation. Incoming information is valued by its' perceived scientific rigour as it relates to personal experience, and weighted based on its' alignment with emotional reactions and preconceptions. Often, scientific work is steeped in assumptions of what is normal and right for a particular culture, without scholars realising the influence of their own forestructures and values. Thus, the conclusions derived from some scientific work only serves those assumptions (Jenni and O'Connor, 2005). For example, researchers may find that leaving infants to cry alone is effective at 'training' them to go to sleep and hence is justifiable, but they fail to recognise why such treatments are considered acceptable or why they may be necessary in the first place (Jenni and O'Connor, 2005). Scientific parenting does not exist in a bubble, but is just one tangled symptom of the ebb, flow, and changing manifestations of reasoning and rationalism (Hawkins, 2009).

Parenting typologies have played a significant role in parenting science during the past century. Parenting typologies describe both parenting styles and parenting practices. Parenting styles constitute a parent's beliefs and values, while parenting practices describe the parent's physical actions. Brenner and Fox (1999) found that the physical and communicative qualities of parenting practices are more directly linked to childhood outcomes than are parenting styles.

Baumrind (1966) described the most commonly used and enduring academic typology for parenting practice (Baumrind, 1966, 1996; Brenner and Fox, 1999;

Darling and Steinberg, 1993). She initially identified three types of parenting: authori*tative*, authori*tarian*, and permissive. As Baumrind (1966, 1996) and others (Brenner and Fox, 1999; Darling and Steinberg, 1993) describe, authoritarian parenting is typified by high parental demands and low warmth or support to meet those demands. It is an oppressive form of parenting in which the parent's agenda or reality is instigated with force or manipulation, and does not account for the position of the child. Authoritative parenting is typified by high parental demands and high levels of warmth and support to meet those demands. It is a type of parenting that exemplifies strong core leadership based on firm reasoned boundaries, validation of the child's position, and open communication. Permissive parenting is typified by low levels of demand and high levels of warmth or support. In this situation, the child holds directive power and the adults do not set effective boundaries. Maccoby and Martin (1983) extended these parenting classifications to also include an alternative measure of parental demand, and thus provided an additional category (as well as a more revealing way of assessing the previous three), neglect or ambivalence to a child's needs or position.

Darling and Steinberg (1993) point out that the work of Baumrind has not yet addressed the disparity of outcomes for children among different contexts and cultures. Indeed, work is also needed to understand why particular groups value certain outcomes over others, and how such underlying assumptions of 'good and bad' guide both parenting and parenting research. For example, academic achievement is often used as a means of measuring the outcomes of the different parenting types in western settings. This often assumes that the greater a child's academic achievement, the more desirable a certain method of parenting is. Such assumptions require further dismantling and exploration.

In the following three sections I will look more closely at three contemporary parenting styles which are most relevant to the context of my parenting experiences, and therefore my autoethnographic analysis. These styles may not directly feature in parenting scholarship and science, but rather reflect cultural, historical, and social phenomena of the past century which may have influenced my autoethnographic parenting experiences. While there are as many parenting styles as there are parents, I will present three examples of parenting styles which represent three broad discourses, and ontologically and epistemologically link these parenting styles to the progression of social and environmental scholarship. The examples are presented as they emerged historically, although the actual progression of these ideas would have been much more complicated and tangled throughout time. The following sections progress from the authoritarian parenting of the first half of the 20th century, to interest in hunter-gatherer and attachment parenting during the counterculture era of the 60's and 70's, and lastly begins to refine into streams of gentle parenting of the 80's, 90's and beyond. Of course, these styles represent periods of discourse, publication, and heightened interest in particular parenting styles/practices which have contributed to my autoethnographic understanding of parenting - they don't describe how all (or even most, depending on the style) children were parented during different eras.

3.4 Detachment, Authority, and Moral Conformity

Parenting gurus, physicians, publications, and advertisements of the early 20th century and post-war period (in Europe, North America, and Australia) advocated a range of detachment parenting practices aimed at preventing 'spoiling', dependency,

and instilling morality (Apple, 1995; Baumrind, 1996). Many of these authoritarian practices and attitudes linger today, particularly when parenting practices and attitudes are passed down through people's own experiences of being parented (Campbell and Gilmore, 2007; Simons et al, 1991; Thornberry et al, 2003).

According to Solomon et al (1993) parents believed that spoiling is the act of damaging an infant's character by responding to their cries, holding them, or providing other forms of perceived pampering. This pampering was thought to lead to children who were self-centred, inconsiderate of others, immature, and lazy. These values were reinforced by popular baby care manuals of the period, such as Truby King's *Mothercraft* in 1913 (King, 1913; Rowold, 2013). The values around spoiling also mingled well with other parental values and beliefs, such as independent sleeping (originating from evangelical values about beds, sexuality, and compartmentalising the home), that infants are inherently manipulative, and that children should be 'seen and not heard' (Blunden et al, 2011; Keller, 2013; Sears and Sears, 2001).

It has been suggested by Boyce (2014), that much of the contemporary treatment of infants and children is steeped in the underlying belief that children are 'born bad', as exemplified by the Christian story of Original Sin. For example, common childhood behaviours such as crying, whining, hitting, biting, tantrums, perceived rudeness, and the like are assumed to be evidence of children's fundamental 'badness', which then requires some form of parental force, manipulation, and retribution to correct. Kohn (2005) also mirrors the sentiment that children are seen as fundamentally 'bad':

> At least in part, then, conditional parenting is based on the deeply cynical belief that accepting kids for who they are just frees them to be bad because, well, that's who they are (Kohn, 2005, p. 22).

Behaviourism, commonly associated with the work of B.F. Skinner, was also an engrained way of thinking about children in terms of their outward behaviours (Kohn, 2005; Ruiz, 1995; Skinner, 1953) . As Kohn (2005) explains:

> […] all behaviors are believed to start and stop, wax and wane, solely on the basis of whether they are "reinforced". Behaviorists assume that everything we do can be explained in terms of whether it produces some kind of reward, either one that's deliberately offered or one that occurs naturally (Kohn, 2005, p. 12).

Rewards are one such way of manipulating the behaviour of children, or of rationalising the motivations of 'good' and 'bad' behaviour, regardless of internal processes or feelings. Parental affection is seen as one such conditional reward which is lavishly given as praise to reinforce 'good' behaviour, and withdrawn to discourage 'bad' behaviours.

Various forms of punishment are also utilised to enforce moral conformity and obedience in authoritarian types of parenting. Punishment utilises fear of future pain, loss, or disadvantage as a means of demonstrating power and controlling the immediate behaviour of charges (Trifan et al, 2014). In this mindset, a child is viewed as an adult in training, and so when children deviate from acceptable adult behaviour (e.g. misbehave), adults view their role as a force which shapes them into ideal and virtuous adults. Children are not valued in their own right, as developmentally and individually unique persons living in the present, and so their

distinct ways of being in the world are judged through idealised and pre-determined lenses of good and bad.

As Plumwood (1991) asserts, the oppression of women and nature is founded in the rise of rationalism and reasoning. Parenting was not spared the impositions of rationalism, which aligns with religious values of what is good and right (Apple, 1995; Boyce, 2014). Children were linked with the irrational (such as being silly, thoughtless, lacking logic or intelligence) and adults with rational (such as being level-headed decision makers and knowing what is 'right and good'), much like many other dualisms of the colonial era which gave rational superiority to adult white males, and rational inferiority to women, children, nature, and non-white people (Plumwood, 1993; Warren, 1990, 1993).

Plumwood (2002) emphasises how irrational such rationalism can be, in that it recognises the maladaptive outcomes of certain rational practices, yet persists under the guise of other rational justifications. Social scholars may demonstrate the disparaging relational outcomes of authoritarian parenting, yet it still sometimes persists under rational justifications of goodness, rightness, and effectiveness. For example, the Canadian government legally sanctions the corporeal punishment of children, rationalising such treatment as protecting both adults and children by maintaining order, yet it contradicts a wealth of scientific literature on the greater anti-social outcomes of corporeal punishment for both individuals and societies (Durrant et al, 2003; Zolotor et al, 2011).

Baby trainers, whose influence is most notable in the treatment of infant sleep, exemplified the logic of adult superiority by combining the scientific evidence of 'training' effectiveness with the cultural acceptability of adults instrumentally

'improving' children. Emmitt Holt (1907) and John B. Watson (Watson and Watson, 1928) were influential baby trainers of the early 20th century, directing parents to keep babies on strict one-size-fits-all schedules and limit excessive warmth to prevent spoiling.

The demands of modernity and its wealth of science-based parenting advice has blurred and confused many of these values and the personal rationales for detachment practices which still linger (Blunden et al, 2011). For example, in more modern times the demands of full-time parental employment, including the employment of mothers, may lead to the use of some detachment and authoritarian parenting techniques, rather than fears of character damage (van Engen, 2010). While authoritarian parenting has lingered through intergenerational transmission (and perhaps more generally through the cultural acceptance of mastery and scientific approaches to relationships), Trifan et al (2014) suggests its prevalence in western countries is declining as parents reflect upon and question aspects of their own upbringing and encounter other parenting styles and practices.

3.5 Attachment and Continuum

In 1945 Dr. Benjamin Spock rocked the parenting status quo by telling mothers to trust themselves and their instincts. This challenged scientific, medical, and patriarchal authority, and even created a backlash from the science community that accused Dr. Spock's emphasis on 'permissive' parenting as causing the counter-culture of the 1960's (Rowold, 2013). Spock's (1945) work paved the way for deeper reflection on the parent-child relationship, and opened doors for more liberal and

controversial parenting styles and practices, like attachment and continuum parenting.

In psychology, the theory that characterises the intimate binding of caregiver (usually indicating the mother) and infant is known as attachment theory. Attachment theory was introduced by John Bowlby in the 1950s as a fusion of the differing theories about the mutual need for closeness between mother and infant (Etelson, 2007; Keller, 2013; Sears and Sears, 2001). He was joined by Mary Ainsworth, who established a range of attachment classifications, as well as documented evidence supporting the link between parent-child attachments and the qualities of children's future relationships (Ainsworth, 1989; Etelson, 2007). Ainsworth also identified that the most important factor in determining the quality of mother-infant attachment is the responsiveness and sensitivity of the mother to her infant's cues (Ainsworth, 1989; Keller, 2013; Sears and Sears, 2001).

Attachment theory was extended by the paediatricians William and Mary Sears into the seven B's of attachment parenting; birth bonding, breastfeeding, babywearing, bedding close to baby, belief in the communication of babies cries, beware of baby trainers, and balanced family life (Buskens, 2001; Etelson, 2007; Sears and Sears, 2001). The Sears' B's are intended to facilitate physical closeness and so enhance parental responsiveness and secure attachments. Although the Sears are not well published and their work is little explored in academic literature, mainstream attachment parenting styles (adopted in western cultures) are largely based on their advice (Etelson, 2007; Sears and Sears, 2001).

'Attachment parenting' is introduced, practiced and interpreted in a vastly different ways by different people. Attachment parenting also comes with a mixed ontological

and epistemological position. It is a practice which was born from the science of attachment theory, is evidenced, supported, and furthered by science, but values innate and contextual parenting instincts, assumed to be congruent with evolved human biology (Etelson, 2007; Sears and Sears, 2001).

Much like Bowlby (Bowlby, 1988) and Ainsworth (Ainsworth, 1989), Jean Liedloff observed parenting qualities such as responsiveness, trust, and communication in the hunter-gatherer communities of the Yequana people in South America. She disseminated her experiences in the controversial and widespread book *The Continuum Concept* in 1975 (Buskens, 2001; Etelson, 2007; Liedloff, 1975). Proponents of the 'continuum' or hunter-gatherer model of parenting also advocate that many hunter-gatherer values and practices are congruent with intrinsic human biology. As a result, they believe that intellectual and abstracted parenting values and practices may have adverse developmental consequences (Buskens, 2001; Konner, 2004).

Mathews (2005) also takes issue with abstracted environmental values and practices:

> […] under the direction of abstract thought, agents intentionally intervene in a course of events to super-impose on it a set of abstractly conceived ends of their own (Mathews, 2005, p. 27).

Equally, Rose's experience with the Yarralin Aboriginals, recognises the relational contributions of hunter-gatherer cultures to relational knowledge, such as fitting into and permeating place – both spiritually and physically (Rose, 2002, 2005, 2008). Some hunter-gatherer cultures provide insights into resilient human survival which is dependent upon strong and complex social and material attachments, distanced (although, not altogether disconnected) from the conditions of modernity (Mathews,

2008; Rose, 2005). That's not to say that people in western modernity cannot form deep, mutual, caregiving relationships, but that modernity can create obstacles that both necessitate and enable the separation of parent and child (such as external employment and child care) (Roelvink and Gibson-Graham, 2009; van der Horst and van der Veer, 2008).

In hunter-gather cultures such as the Yarralin and Yequana, children and parents work and live together in connective family groups utilising practices such as carrying infants constantly, sharing food communally, including children in daily tasks, sharing childcare among close family members, and allowing children to take risks (Etelson, 2007; Konner, 2004; Rose 2005; 2008). In some hunter-gatherer cultures everyone and everything merges (a continuum of sorts) – social dynamics mingle with ecological ones (Konner, 2004; Muir et al, 2010; Rose 2002; 2005; 2008).

While there are many important relational insights from hunter-gatherer cultures, followers of continuum and similar hunter-gather parenting styles may risk mistranslating and over simplifying specific practices and perspectives which serve the wellbeing of specific groups of people in specific times and circumstances, but which may not support wellbeing when such knowledge is misplaced (Buskens, 2001). There is a tendency to romanticise the hunter-gather life-style as ideal and biologically perfect, yet these people often suffer their own types of difficulties and hardships, and so such knowledge should always be considered in the context from which it came (Konner, 2004; Muir et al, 2010). For example, these styles of parenting may be misinterpreted as child-centred, leading parents to believe that responsiveness means to do everything the child asks or to keep their children

constantly happy, and so struggle to maintain relational boundaries and look after their own interests in balance with their child's (Buskens, 2001).

The western ideas of authoritarianism and permissiveness - especially when they are constructed dualistically - may predispose those parents who seek to move beyond the authoritarian practices of the past to leap to the opposite extreme, permissiveness, for fear of oppressing their children (Christopher et al, 2013). Rather, responsiveness implies an active dialogue (verbal, physical, physiological, emotional, and so on) between parent and child that helps both understand one another's position and needs - this does not negate the dialogical relevance of boundaries.

The continuum parenting philosophy reflects the atmosphere of the environmental movements of the 60's and 70's, and links with the values of deep ecology (Buskens, 2001). Both privilege wilderness and the 'natural' as ideals, and conceptually focus on holism and connectivity (Buskens, 2001). As Plumwood (1991, 1993) criticises, such ideologies harbour dualistic tendencies, as they neglect the messy, diverse, and challenging aspects of relating and privilege a particular sect of being as 'right and good'. Hunter-gather styles of parenting, as well as some accounts of deep ecology, discount technology and western people as a part of the continuum, and therefore neglect a great diversity of landscapes and cultures which are a part of greater relational webs (Buskens, 2001).

While continuum and attachment parenting can contribute to a relational understanding of parenting (particularly from a biological and historical perspective), and likewise deep ecology and wilderness-focused environmentalism can contribute to relational scholarship, our understandings may need to keep moving deeper to better grasp relationality in infinitely diverse contexts.

3.6 Resources for Infant Educarers (RIE)

The parenting style Resources for Infant Educarers' (RIE) was launched by Magda Gerber (an educator who worked in post-war Hungarian orphanages) and neurologist Thomas Forrest in 1978 (Cooper et al, 2014; Gerber, 1979). It is an authori*tative* style of parenting which has refined the philosophies of attachment parenting to also include discourse on respect, relational politics, and the subjectivity of others. It is worthwhile to consider this particular parenting style, because it has not only shaped my parenting approaches and views and therefore my autoethnographic analysis, but it is a parenting style which has entered mainstream parenting discourse in the past ten years that reflects some of the core philosophies of Plumwood, Mathews and Rose.

This parenting method is grounded in a like-minded respect for children, which entails encountering children with authenticity, viewing children as active relational participants, 'whole' people, and as possessing basic human qualities such as reasoning, self-preservation, caring for others, emotions, and so on (Cooper et al, 2014; Gerber, 1979; Lansbury, 2014). This understanding of children challenges the dualisms which view children as incomplete, as requiring improvements/training to become people in the world, as inherently 'bad' in some moral contexts, and as mindless and irrational (Boyce, 2014; Cooper et al, 2014).

RIE shares values of responsiveness and communication with attachment, continuum, and similar streams of parenting, but provides more specific boundaries for practices of respect. Some core practices of respect include not restraining infants

and toddlers with devices (such as walkers, carriers, bouncers, and the like), allowing infants to develop skills and autonomy at their own pace (for example, they don't help a baby to walk or sit), being emotionally present during routine care practices, allowing infants to play without adult goals or interruptions, and keeping infant entertainment simple and infant-led. RIE practitioners also promote the validation of children's emotions and experiences without taking them personally or directing them. For example, it is not the parent's role to distract the child from how they feel, judge emotional value, or make emotions go away. Rather, they are present, responsive, and supportive of what is, and mindful to remain 'unruffled' in the face of their own stress. Upholding boundaries is another core component of respect in RIE. RIE practitioners describe ways that parents can create and maintain personal and social boundaries with reason, clarity, empathy, calm, and confidence in order to be an understanding, yet firm leader and role model (Cooper et al, 2014; Gerber, 1979; Lansbury, 2014).

From my experiences engaging with RIE groups and literature, there is a tendency to view Magda Gerber's work as gospel and definitive (as strict rules to follow), rather than value the individual circumstances of each parent and child's journey. Respect is viewed as a static and definable concept demonstrated by very specific practices; rather, I would argue that respect is relational, fluid, and subjective. It is ironic that a parenting philosophy which aims to validate the individual subjectivities of children does not validate the different ways in which respect may be viewed and practised, especially in non-western cultures and contexts (Hammond, 2009).

RIE's 'let them be' attitude toward children is reflective of Mathew's (2004, 2006) position that we should let environmental relationships unfold in their own way

while validating our own agency in change, rather than abstractly direct relationships from a distance to meet certain ends:

> By way of synergy then we *do* change the course of events, yet we do so while still letting the world be, in the sense that, in its engagement with us, the world is still following the contours of its own conativity (Mathews, 2006, p.102).

In this context, conativity describes what the world (or any being) wants for itself, and so in 'letting be' – whether in relation to children or more-then-human others – the imperative is to stop ourselves from allowing our own ideas, impulses, anxieties, beliefs, reactions, and so on to interfere (without consent) with the conativity of others. Like Mathew's concept of human agency, RIE asserts that parents are present and have a strong role in their children's 'becoming', but rejects (in principle, if not always in practice) intellectually abstracted assumptions of 'what is best' for others, but rather encourages parents to step back and allow children and our relationship with them to evolve according to its own timeline (Gerber, 1979; Lansbury, 2014). Both philosophies take the position that others have subjectivities which are individual and valuable in their own right (much like Plumwood, 1991; 1993), and so should be encountered as communicative kin. As Mathews so eloquently describes of such a relational approach:

> We seek to make contact with the self that *they* know, the self as they experience it – the subjective aspect of their being – rather than with aspects of the self that are outside their experience, such as synapses and neural pathways and unconscious behaviour patterns. When such contact with the self as they experience it – as subject – is made, and they communicate to us something of the meaning they have for themselves, we do in fact share a deep sense of mutual knowing, but this is a felt form of knowing, only secondarily translatable into information (Mathews, 2005, p. 78).

Indeed, RIE ventures down an ontological path which asks parents to experience their children as they are, without the judgement and assumptions of past parenting concepts – to see a toddler having a tantrum as a soul struggling, rather than as someone behaving badly that needs adult correction.

These ontological and epistemological linkages between parenting styles, such as RIE, and environmental scholarship strengthens and justifies parenting practice as an important praxis for the latter. Additionally, further philosophical development of RIE could provide a very specific style of parenting through which to advance a praxis for environmental scholarship, and environmental scholarship could help practices like RIE develop a fluid philosophical and ethical grounding.

3.7 Conclusion

Both parenting and environmental scholarship have ridden and responded to deeper waves of ontological and epistemological changes throughout the past century of western history. Plumwood's (1991; 1993) descriptions of dualistic and oppressive dominant cultures can be seen in early 20th century authoritarian parenting, while deep ecology's privileging of the 'natural' can be seen in forms of attachment and continuum parenting. Attachment and continuum parenting also speak to the metaphysical interests of Mathews (2005; 2010), and the indigenous relational knowledge championed by Rose (2002; 2005; 2008). RIE, a parenting style applicable to the current generation of parents, offers a more refined parenting concept based in notions of respect, authentic engagement, and letting children be, much like Mathews' (2006) concept of post-materialist modalities and Plumwood's

(1991; 1993) dialogical ethic. The ontological and epistemological links between parenting and relational environmental scholarship (and their embeddment in similar contexts and cultures) supports my position that parenting would serve as a practical means of embodying relational scholarship in both parents and children.

Chapter 4 Methods and Methodology

Subjecting the world to an epistemological probe, then, is unobjectionable as long as the world is considered pure object. When it is considered as subject however, such probing appears a far less innocent endeavour. The appropriate approach to such a world would appear to be not, in the first instance, to investigate it, but rather to ***encounter*** *it. […] To seek encounter with an other, then, is very different from seeking to know it, at least when knowledge is understood in its scientific sense.*

(Mathews, 2003, pp.76 – 77)

4.1 Introduction

As Mathews (2003) describes, understanding the subjective terrain of relationality cannot be satisfied through scientific information gathering alone, rather, relationships are understood in infinitely many ways, including through reflection upon such relational encounters with others. The methods I use to answer my research questions are founded in relational encounter – of generating and presenting understandings of experience from the introspective reality of the self. I collect parenting stories, and reflexively analyse their relational content, in parallel with the relational scholarship of Mathews, Rose, and Plumwood to weave understandings and critiques of the relational aspects of parenting and of being in the world – the power struggles, intimacy, love, culture, and material interactions.

We begin to understand encounter through the internal process of cyclically de-tangling our biases or forestructures. This occurs within the real-time ebb and flow of living and material experiences (Converse, 2012; Ellis, 1999; Ellis et al, 2011; Fleming et al, 2003). They cannot be captured, controlled, documented accurately, charted, or studied in a laboratory. They are unique in time and space, and cannot be repeated by self or others. They cannot be understood, even by the experiencer or researcher, as a single static truth. Interpretations of phenomena evolve through the developments of time and changing perspective (Ellis, 1999).

The methods I use in this project mingle the traditions of autoethnography (the reflexive analysis of self-experiences) and of phenomenology (the qualitative detangling of lived phenomena). In conjunction with internal processes of reflexive analysis, the action of writing the analysis chapters of this thesis helped me to distil understandings about the connections between parenting and relational scholarship and their practical significance to the aims of each. These understandings provided insights and lived examples of both the intimate connection of relational (environmental) themes to parenting, as well as the ways in which parenting may be praxis for relational scholarship.

4.2 Qualitative Inquiry

The methodological foundations for this thesis fall within the broad field of qualitative inquiry – a field of research which aims to understand that which cannot be measured numerically. Rather, the researcher *describes* and *interprets* complex relationships in time and place (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). As such, this process is

interpretive, or it aims to understand and communicate understandings of phenomena in terms of *meanings*, and how such meanings and understandings came into being (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Geanellos, 1998). Cresswell (2013) describes narrative inquiry (interpretation of written/spoken/illustrative representations of phenomena), phenomenology (understanding experience), grounded theory (theories generated from field data), ethnography (interpreting socio-cultural descriptions), and case studies (detailed analysis of a particular case or cases) as the primary routes of undertaking qualitative research. I utilise phenomenology and autoethnography (which includes aspects of narrative inquiry) to further my understandings of relationality. Concepts of relationality can be considered as both an encounter of self and other (phenomenology), and shaped by socio-cultural context (ethnography/autoethnography). Similarly to Mathews (2003), Plumwood (1991) describes relationality as a rejection of instrumentalism and a focus on the relationship between self and nature. I further refine that description to a focus on the interrelationships of individuals who are engaged in giving and receiving care, such as in parenting.

One glaring criticism of interpretive research is that its trustworthiness cannot be tested. In other words, it cannot be proved that the research findings were not made-up to meet some predetermined ends (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). While empirical research can also be faked and believed without question, ultimately, if someone wanted to test the trustworthiness of empirical research they could replicate the methods and compare the results (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). You can't replicate interpretive results in the same manner; they are unique in time and space. Indeed, different people will interpret encounters differently. However, interpretations may have generalisable context and meaning. For example, readers may connect with

common experiences, and as a person reading the experiences of another person, you can use your own intuition and common sense to judge the plausibility of the results and the value of their particular meanings (Ellis, 1999; Koch, 1998).

In this thesis, parenting experiences are linked to external literature about parenting and relational scholarship, which provide external support for particular arguments. Furthermore, the aim of interpretive research is not to reproduce accurate and detailed accounts of lived encounters. Rather, this thesis presents the creative communication of my interpretation and cyclic self-reflection of life experiences. This may not be objectively accurate, but it can still be honest, reflexive, and rigorous (Koch, 1998). As Ellis writes:

> Since we always create our personal narrative from a situated location, trying to make our present, imagined future, and remembered past cohere, there's no such thing as orthodox reliability in autoethnographic research (Ellis, 1999, p. 674).

Within the interpretivist ontological view, no one can reasonably judge the validity of another person's 'knowing' based on their own preconceived ideals (Converse, 2012; Romano, 2012). If we want to further a relational understanding of life, then we need to consider all of the different ways of knowing it (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Fisher and Stenner, 2011; Romano, 2012).

This process is not positivist, objective or scientific, so it does not make sense to evaluate it with terms from these traditions. This includes terms such as legitimacy, accuracy, reliability, and confirm-ability (Dumitrica, 2010; Ellis et al, 2011). For example, as Dumitrica (2010) explains, the legitimacy of research depends on how the society in which the research will be produced, interpreted and/or used decides what information constitutes truth (a positivist concept). I am not intending to

transfer objective facts and evidenced truths to my audience, and so I do not need to account for the accuracy or legitimacy of my informing materials (Ellis, 1999; Van Fraassen, 1976; Wall, 2006). Instead of considering this process under the shadow of ontologically miss-matched concepts (such as legitimacy), perhaps this methodology needs to be examined and exhibited individually, and its' validity and worth assessed against its' own research goals (Ellis et al, 2011; Koch, 1998). While I am accountable for my specified research goals and what I produce in response to them, I am not accountable for the research goals others may impose on my work based on their presumptions of what research 'is' and 'should be'. As Ellis et al (2011) so poignantly write:

> Unless we agree on a goal, we cannot agree on the terms by which we can judge how to achieve it (Ellis et al, 2011, no page number).

Thus, to create a piece of research whose meanings and understandings can be trusted by others, *transparency* and *richness* (quality) of thought, process, and presentation are essential (Fleming et al, 2003; Humphreys, 2005; Koch, 1998). Transparency requires systematic critical-reflexivity from the researcher, particularly to unveil pre-understandings (biases) and personal positions which cyclically shape understandings through time (Converse, 2012; Ellis, 1999; Humphreys, 2005; Sell-Smith and Lax, 2013). Essentially, the researcher tells their audience: *Here is my research question. This is my story of experience, carefully written and embedded with rich meaning. These are my pre-understandings and how I came to recognise them. This process is how I came to understand my experience. You don't have to like it, but it's reflexive, transparent, and meticulous. I invite you to interpret and reflect upon your own understandings of my experience and experiences of your own. These new understandings may move us forward in 'X' ways.*

4.2.1 Phenomenology

The term ‘phenomena’ can be used to describe happenings among self and/or others, such as aspects of culture and relationships. Phenomenology means ‘to bring to light’ the experience or observation of phenomena to consciousness (Allen-Collinson, 2011; Fleming et al, 2003). Phenomenology is both a philosophical tradition and a practical method for researching experience. The philosophical side of phenomenology argues for the validity of experiential knowledge, particularly as it relates to understandings of consciousness, materiality, and their synthesis (Allen-Collinson, 2011; Fleming et al, 2003; Gardner, 2017; Walsham, 2006). The practical side of phenomenology focuses on how researchers may communicate and analyse the meanings generated by experience to produce new insights which may be of value to others (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Geanellos, 1998; McNamara, 2005).

The complex philosophical tradition of phenomenology was disseminated by the German philosophers Husserl (1859-1938) and his student Heidegger (1889-1976), and extended by others such as Weber, Schutz, and Gadamer (Converse, 2012; Gadamer, 1975; Heidegger, 1927/1962; Husserl, 1900/2000, Koch, 1996). Heidegger and Gadamer saw the need to value self-evidence and reflexivity in knowledge-making when they pursued phenomenology, something that is often lacking from standard forms of research (Gadamer, 1975; Heidegger, 1927/1962; Romano, 2012; Sell-Smith and Lax, 2013).

The philosophical position of this research project is aligned with the work of Husserl’s student, Heidegger (Converse, 2012; Fagerberg and Norberg, 2009;

Gadamer, 1975; Heidegger, 1927/1962; Koch, 1996). Husserl believed that a person's prejudices would cloud the pure 'essence' of the phenomena they experience, and therefore require 'bracketing out' (Husserl, 1900/2000; McConnell-Henry, 2009). Conversely, Heidegger and Gadamer viewed prejudices as a normal and deeply rooted part of how people understand the world, and are therefore a valuable component of understanding experience (Fleming et al, 2003; Gadamer, 1975; Heidegger, 1927/1962; McConnell-Henry, 2009).

This research is best supported by Heideggerian phenomenology, as my pre-understandings (and the questioning thereof) are critically important to understanding relationships embedded in culture and subjectivity. The interpretation of socio-culturally shaped meaning, embedded within experience, creates contextual understandings of phenomena (Fagerberg and Norberg, 2009; Gadamer, 1975; Heidegger, 1927/1962). Heidegerrian phenomenology also supports the view that research meaning is co-created between participant (for example, the readers of this thesis) and researcher, and that a researcher cannot be removed from the process, and should be open and reflexive about their position (Heidegger, 1927/1962). This is an important point for the study of self-experience (Converse, 2012; Flood, 2010; Koch, 1996; Sell-Smith and Lax, 2013).

The practical phenomenon under investigation in this thesis is relationality. More specifically, I explore the physical, mental, cultural, and metaphysical aspects of relationships of interdependence. The practice of phenomenology as a research tradition is aimed at just 'letting things be' (much like Mathew's philosophical scholarship) while providing meaning and context (rather than theory) for the people who experience phenomena (Abawi, 2012; McConnell-Henry et al., 2009). The

outcome is specific to the time, place, and researcher, but can also provide generalised themes (such as about relationships) which may be meaningful to others (Abawi, 2012; Flood, 2010).

The critiques levelled at phenomenology are much like those applied to interpretive research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Noe, 2007). They reflect a positivist epistemology, which seeks to evidence objective truth and fact, clashing with interpretivist epistemologies which seek to understand that which is subjective and not factual, true, or measurable (as described above). Within phenomenological discourse, pure phenomenology has been criticised as regarding its subjects as autonomous or free floating with a focus on introspective knowing (Noe, 2007; Stoller, 2009). The consequence of understanding experience as pure subjectivity is that such research does not further any arguments, as it does not take a stance on reality nor situate itself in a shared physical and metaphysical world (Noe, 2007; Stoller, 2009). Noe (2007) says that in order to move past such a dilemma phenomenology must be grounded in context, insomuch that experience is approached as an integration of the world with one's own perspective, and that the knowing generated from experience is not introspective but connective. This acknowledges that no mind exists in isolation, and therefore experience is just one of the many manifestations of a shared world. Simply put, to contribute to an argument about the world, one must move beyond autonomous introspection and view experience as a body's integration with the world.

Phenomenology is commonly used in nursing research as a means for medical professionals to understand the experience of receiving medical treatment. This arena of literature provides a broad testing ground for the practice and critique of

phenomenology (Geanellos, 1998; McNamara, 2005). Geanellos (1998) describes the intersection of phenomenological practice and philosophy in nursing research, critiquing nursing research that lacks an acknowledgment of the philosophical responsibilities that result from using phenomenological methods. These responsibilities include: Bearing in mind the structure of interpretive understanding (such as how understanding comes about, the multiplicity of interpretations, and how interpretations might be judged); the role of pre-understandings; questioning the perspectives which create textual data; and acknowledging the discourse surrounding interpretative understandings. Geanellos (1998) concludes that working out ones pre-understandings (also known as forestructures or biases) is the most important aspect of phenomenological work, as understandings are always born from our root subjective reality. Understandings do not suddenly appear from blank space, but are always built upon what we already know. Therefore, they are ontological as well as epistemological (Geanellos, 1998). As he describes:

> Consequently, researchers who use Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenology are obliged to demonstrate the working out of their forestructures in terms of the phenomenon under investigation (Geanellos, 1998, p. 156).

I interpret Geanellos' (1998) description of 'working out of their forestructures' to indicate that researchers should employ a process to reflect upon and communicate their forestructures to their audience. In this research project, I uncover my own pre-understanding of various relational phenomena through a cyclic analysis processes. Heidegger's cyclic process of reflexivity - called *hermeneutics* - is a significant means of linking the philosophical understanding of experience as knowledge, and of the physical and mental processes of creating such knowledge (Fleming et al, 2003; Gadamer, 1975; Heidegger, 1927/1962; McConnell-Henry et al, 2009; Reeder,

1998). Hermeneutics is the interpretation of texts by cycling from the parts to the whole and back and forth, with no specific beginning or ending point (Fleming et al, 2003; Gadamer, 1975; Heidegger, 1927/1962; McConnell-Henry et al, 2009; Reeder, 1998). In the case of experience-based analysis, it broadly refers to the interpretation of any form of communication including conversation, text, video, audio, memories, thoughts, and personal journal entries. It represents the intersection of that which is physical – such as written text – with that which is subjective – such as the reasoned analysis of that text by a situated researcher (Reeder, 1998). In this thesis, I rely heavily on the conventions of language, storytelling, and writing to communicate meaning to readers, and to provoke questions about my own perspectives and biases and what they mean in terms of relational understanding. As Geanellos (1998) describes:

> Buker refers to the relationship that develops between textual interpretations (epistemology) and self-interpretation (ontology) as the two directions in which hermeneutic research moves forward. For example, through the interpretive process one's biases are revealed, perspectives altered and beliefs modified, thereby providing renewed understanding of the self through which other horizons may come into view. In this way, each return to the text allows a transformation through which an opportunity exists for different understandings of the self and of the text (Gaenellos, 1998, p. 155).

As I will describe in the following sections, my pre-understandings are brought to light and changed through the action of writing stories of relational experience, of reading and re-reading those stories, of reading and critiquing associated relational scholarship, of communicating the insights derived from their synergies, and even through editing the chapters and re-considering them after a period of time. Such

inward and outward movement, flowing from physical happenings to intellectual perceptions, which are often tangled and sporadic, describes a fluid and inductive means of generating knowledge about the synergy of parenting and relational scholarship, and importantly how such meanings can embody the practices of others through ontological and epistemological inspiration. Hermeneutics, as a means of researching experience through text, links phenomenology to autoethnography. It is also an experiential and narrative-based research method which I will introduce in the next section.

4.2.2 Autoethnography

Like phenomenology, autoethnography is another means to expand our realm of knowledge beyond static 'truths' and to incorporate the often missing forms of knowing that come from a deeper reflection and interpretation of lived experience (Romano, 2012). As Meerwald (2013) describes, autoethnography is a merging of the cultural studies of ethnography and the reflections of self-experience of autobiography, all while giving voice to a variety of interacting players. Autoethnography involves the documentation (mental, textual, audio, photographic, and others) and reflexive analysis of a lived experience from the perspective and socio-cultural paradigm of the self (Anderson, 2006; Ellis, et al, 2011; Ngunjiri, 2010; Wall, 2006). This methodology also allows the researcher to progressively produce deeper meanings of cultural experience through continual reflection and refinement of innate and experience based insights, extended by critical engagement with various literary and social discourses (Ellis et al, 2011; Mest, 2008; Wall, 2006). In this thesis, I will be utilising aspects of autoethnography to analyse my own

parenting experiences, but will be doing so with the intent to critically link parenting to the phenomenological concepts of the relational scholarship of Mathews, Rose, and Plumwood.

During the past twenty years, the researchers Carolyn Ellis and Arthur Bochner have led the development, defence, and promotion of autoethnography as a robust research methodology (Ellis, 1999; Ellis et al, 2011; Wall, 2006). They utilise evocative autoethnography, or a form of creative narrative, which allows the reader to both feel and discover their own meanings and understandings without the descriptive abstraction of traditional ethnography (Anderson, 2006). Autoethnography removes the dilemma of trying to decipher and transcribe meaning from someone else's external story, but instead highlights that we have yet to understand our own story, and so begins the journey of reflexively understanding the socio-cultural realm a bit closer to home.

Autoethnography is a well suited means of utilising Heidegger and Gadamer's phenomenological philosophies. Both tradition's rigour and trustworthiness is dependent upon the researcher communicating 'how things are' through their own contextual lens (Koch, 1998). Koch (1998) affirms that reflexivity within phenomenological research is a significant means of upholding rigour, as it forms part of the researcher's position, politics, and location. The interpretivist ontology and constructivist epistemology of both traditions make them advantageous partners for uncovering the valuable understandings of self-experience.

Delemont (2009) sums up the six main criticisms of autoethnography. These criticisms assert that autoethnography cannot meet social science objectives and therefore cannot be considered 'real research'. The criticisms include:

- Scholars should always try to observe social worlds from a distanced position to encourage unbiased and unfamiliar analysis. Autoethnographers can never be distanced from their own world, so their conclusions are based on their own familiar and biased perspective. Therefore, they cannot provide results which are generalised and useful to others.

- Autoethnography can almost never be ethically implemented as others which feature in the autoethnography can usually be deduced as a result of how they relate to the author.

- Autoethnography is purely experience and lacks the necessary analysis to define it as research.

- Autoethnography chooses sides, in that it focuses its ethnography on those that are easy to access (privileged self) rather than those that may be more appropriate or ethically justified to address a particular social research topic.

- Social scientists are not interesting, and the minute details of their lives are unlikely to provide any analytic insights into most social research topics.

- Paid academics have a moral obligation to collect, analyse, and publish research data. Contemplating yourself in an office all day does not meet this moral obligation (Delemont, 2009).

Whether or not these criticisms have any merit depends upon the goals of the research being undertaken and how the researcher utilises autoethnography to achieve them (Ellis et al, 2011). Autoethnographers are people, and as such are most likely a part of some social phenomena. Therefore, they can potentially provide deep insight and perspective into a social science phenomenon, which is usually linked

though the commonalities of the human condition to other perspectives and the bigger picture. To privilege social research which only values data representing a simplified collective perspective, over research which deeply analyses one's own perspective, denies the potential contributions and the linkages of *all* perspectives for furthering social science knowledge (Anderson, 2006).

As previously discussed, biases constitute a person's forestructures – understandings of phenomena before undertaking research which are continually re-shaped through questioning and experience, including the experience of research (Fleming et al, 2003). An autoethnographer can question their own experiences and can just as well as, if not better than, a researcher questioning someone else's experiences. Both are equally capable of openly altering pre-understandings of the research phenomenon to attain a greater level of knowledge. Bias is the foundation of all research, because we want to grow our limited, biased, understanding of it (Fleming et al, 2003; Geanellos, 1998; Koch, 1998).

The more familiar we are with a phenomenon the deeper we can question it, and the more we question it, the more familiar we become. Approaching social science phenomena from an unfamiliar and distanced perspective would be impossible, if not undesirable, as the very point of research is to know more and thereby become familiar with phenomena. Indeed, this methodological approach is not intended to solve problems by sampling all sides; rather it is intended to understand the complexities of a continuum of relational interaction, for which there are no sides or end points (Fleming et al, 2003; Wall, 2006). To identify phenomena as worthy of research indicates that the researcher is making decisions based on a set of biases about the phenomena which inspired the researcher to want to know more.

Therefore, biases should be transparent and explored, but not distanced or ignored. The process of understanding biases uncovers why the research is valuable to people and how they flow on to shape research findings (Ellis et al, 2011; Fleming et al, 2003; Geanellos, 1998; Koch, 1998).

As Delamont (2009) elaborates, autoethnography treads a fine line with autobiography, and not research, particularly if autoethnographers present experiences which do not explicitly further specific research goals. Autoethnographic material needs to be worthy of being reflectively analysed for a clear purpose. Communicating experience does not constitute research by itself; experience needs to be placed specifically as evidence for an argument (Atkinson, 2006; Delemont, 2009; Noe, 2007). Any experience can be analysed regardless of whether it's about yourself or others, but the experiences need to be able to support the overall argument of the research, otherwise, as Delemont (2009) points out, the material is not going to be analytically usable and therefore it is not 'real research'.

The success or failure of autoethnography as a form of research depends on how and why it is used. In this project, I propose that parenting may be praxis for relational scholarship, and that both share a dialogue which may further the other. I then present and analyse autoethnographic parenting experiences to build my argument. I use my parenting experiences as an example or demonstration to identify the underlying connections between parenting and relational scholarship. These stories, and the processes by which I analyse them, may also provide insights and criticisms for both. Every person is going to have a different parenting experience, but there are commonalities across cultures, inherent to the human condition such as nourishment, touch, and communication, which underlie most of my stories. I can connect with

these underlying themes and their associated literature, and use them to make my study and its conclusions relevant to others. Within the scope of my research question, it does not matter that the parenting stories have come from me so long as their origins are transparent and they help elicit an argument.

Any experience of parenting could be analysed here, but I choose autoethnography over other methods of collecting parenting experiences because it allows me to create more depth in my analysis through reflexivity, as well as provide a more fluent and bountiful catalogue of stories collected over a longer period of time than could be expected of external participants. I am not attempting to define how people are parenting their children within a particular society, so collecting vast quantities of external parenting data would not be worthwhile. I only need examples of parenting, any parenting, to demonstrate the root connections between parenting and relational scholarship which support parenting as a praxis for the latter. Therefore, autoethnography is a perfectly suitable means for furthering my research in conjunction with phenomenology.

4.2.3 Writing and Reflexivity as Method

My analysis process is inspired by Fleming et al's (2003) recommendations, but tailored to meet the needs of an autoethnographical study as opposed to a study of participant experiences, as described in Fleming et al (2003). They observed that Heidegger and Gadamer outlined and justified the principles of hermeneutics in their texts, but did not provide a step-by-step process for researchers to work with (Gadamer, 1975; Heidegger, 1927/1962). So, Fleming et al (2003) undertook the task

of recommending a process for creating hermeneutic understandings, based on the original texts of Gadamer. It's important to consider that the following steps are not rules for understanding. It is merely a transparent presentation of my process for creating understanding. As Gadamer (1975) believes, understanding does not need an awareness of rules, nor do rules precipitate understanding as they can burden the interpretive process (Fleming et al, 2003; Gadamer, 1975).

4.2.3.1 Purpose and Intent

As recommended by Denzin and Lincoln (2005), my process began by clearly outlining the purpose and intent of my research. This purpose followed me throughout the analysis, flowing and changing with my understandings, yet anchored in the intent to know experiences of concepts of relationality in new ways. These boundaries both initiated and guided my process for understanding and communicating meaningful experience (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005).

4.2.3.2 Provoke Pre-understandings

To create a meaningful foundation for understandings, we need a means to expose and communicate our pre-understandings, biases, and forestructures. Fleming et al (2003) suggests that pre-understandings can be illuminated through confronting and provoking conversation with a colleague, family member, or friend, followed by personal reflection and journaling. In addition to these methods, I use autoethnographic narrative as a useful means of uncovering pre-understandings,

connecting parenting experience with relational scholarship, and providing my audience with relational context.

Narrative is not a focus of Fleming et al's (2003) method, but in this analysis narration is my primary means of communicating and detangling experience. I kept a journal of personal, uncensored happenings, thoughts, and feelings surrounding my parenting experiences. I then composed and presented a textual collection of stories about significant experiences or relational themes. These stories were written and presented in the style of Ellis and Bochner's evocative autoethnography (Ellis et al, 2011). Creative, and crafted with embedded meanings, these stories draw on memories, feelings, audio recordings, notes, pictures, conversations, social media, or other inspirational material I had access to. My first intention was to get my audience to feel what I felt, appreciate my position, and become personally involved in my story (Ellis, 1999; Humphreys, 2005). My second intention was to communicate and interpret the meanings of my experiences as I experienced them. My narratives didn't need to be accurate, referenced, documented or hard-evidenced in an appendix, although many are documented to assist with recall. The use of creative writing is intended to invite readers into the story, implore them to reflect upon their own experiences and co-create meaning about the research which is complex, innate, and both emotionally felt and critically understood (Ellis, 1999). As Ellis (1999) describes to her autoethnography student:

> Well, yes, if you viewed your project as closer to art than science, then your goal would not be so much to portray the facts of what happened to you accurately but instead to convey the meanings you attached to the experience. You'd want to tell a story that readers could enter and feel a part of. You'd write in a way to evoke readers

> to feel and think about your life and their lives in relation to yours. You'd want them to experience the experience you're writing about (Ellis, 1999, p. 674).

As I have a background in scientific writing, writing creatively was a challenging part of this project. Getting personal and using an evocative expression was difficult. There is value and rigour in communicating my research in a way that is personal and fits with my epistemology. The process is a little messy, but there is meaning in the mess (Sell-Smith and Lax, 2013). Transferring lived experience into static text can remove some of the 'life' from experienced phenomena. I cannot literally insert the audience into my perceived reality, so creative writing is a suitable and portable alternative, but it requires a particular skill set to achieve a rich and easily understandable result (Ellis, 1999; Ferrarello, S., 2012). I propose that to produce a skilfully written autoethnography, I must write with the intent to convey meaning, rather than adhere to convention (Dauphinee, 2010; Koch, 1998). Every nuance of language has a particular effect on the reader, and as an autoethnographer I want to sculpt a clear but interesting means of communicating my understandings and insights (Sell-Smith and Lax, 2013).

4.2.3.3 Creating New Understandings

In the previous step, I provoked insights into my pre-understandings through writing and reflecting upon my parenting narratives. In this aspect of the analysis, I look to others to help me move my understandings forward and to help me look at relational situations or themes in new light. I approached this task through conversation with, and interpretation of, external information sources such as academic literature, social media, audio/visual media, new experiences, and personal conversations (Fleming et

al, 2003). My pre-understandings evolved through time, as I undertook analysis, read and conversed with others, mentally processed the multiplicity of tangled input surrounding my experience, and as I continued to experience life and parenting. This is the hermeneutic circle, cycling from pre-understandings to understandings to pre-understandings – continual change informed by more change. I shift from the parts to the whole of an experience and back again. No understandings are final truths.

Finally, at the end of this thesis, I address my research question. My final insights are intended to be a reflexive response to my inquiry, revealing my evolving understandings (changed pre-understandings) of the research phenomenon. These understandings summarise how I processed and presented my experiences in light of my pre-understandings, critically and openly informed by others (Fleming et al, 2003). New understandings inevitably toss up new questions about the phenomenon of relationality, some of which inspire further exploration in subsequent analysis chapters. In my life beyond this project, the hermeneutic circle will continue to change my understandings as I continue to experience relationality and parenting far beyond the bounds of this research.

4.2.4 Ethical Considerations

While autoethnography is generated by the self, it is also shaped by encounters with others. Therefore, I have an ethical responsibility for the representations of other people in my autoethnographic material (Dauphinee, 2010; Ellis, 1999). Other players constitute people who interact (in person or by distance) with myself and/or my child and pose interesting socio-cultural experiences, which I later record and

reflect upon through text. You may be able to easily identify specific people based on their role or actions, for example, my husband would be easily identifiable without providing a specific name (Ellis, 1999). Family and friends may also be able to identify themselves within the autoethnography based on the story, even if the reader is unlikely to (Ellis, 1999). To uphold personal and legal ethical values, I provided involved family and friends the opportunity to give written consent, with a non-mandatory option to allow identification by name and location. I allowed participants to view a draft copy of publishable results before submission. This ensured that they have fully consented to their representation and identifiability in this project. Despite obtaining consent, there are still topics, insights, and events that I won't include as a part of this thesis, because they would be uncomfortable or offensive to some family and friends. As a part of this process, I obtained formal ethics approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of Tasmania.

Additionally, the use of self-evidence in autoethnography eliminates the colonialist tensions of ethnography, where researchers studied other people from a position of power, and thus reinforced a superior/inferior social segregation among intersecting cultures (Dauphinee, 2010; Ellis et al, 2011). Thus, this methodology is respectful of Plumwood, Mathews, and Rose's emphasis on detangling the lingering dualisms of colonialism and its oppression of indigenous people, particularly in the context of Australia's settler history. As I am working within my own socio-cultural context, I can only represent my own views and interpretations of cultural values, even if I am reflecting upon an interaction with others, it is still transcribed from my own viewpoint.

4.3 Conclusion

As Mathews describes:

> The appropriate approach to such a world would appear to be not, in the first instance, to investigate it, but rather to encounter it (2003, p.76).

Interpretive knowledge of encounter is a significant source of 'knowing' in daily life, and so it should have an established place in academic research epistemology. Ultimately, we want to 'know' to further living, so it is logical that the experience of living should play a critical role in how we know. The greatest challenge for interpretive methodologies is to become as credible, available, and mainstream as objective science – a process of building person-to-person trust, as you would with a new acquaintance (Ellis et al, 2011). I must strive to present myself though my research as I would in person to build credibility with others; communicate with conviction, do what I say I will, disclose when things don't go to plan, acknowledge what I don't understand, reflect on the understandings of others, be critical but non-judgemental, and project a positive and open intent. Many of these things can be more difficult in practice, but the more honesty, transparency and reflexivity I put into this presentation, the richer my meanings and understandings will be. I will then be in a better position to build trust and rapport with my audience, and further my research agenda.

If you strip away the philosophies and traditions of research, you are left with people who simply want to *know*, and people who know instinctively through encounters. This knowing helps us to cope with life and move forward. It is not perfect, clean, or uniform, but it moves us on intellectually, spiritually, and physically. By exploring knowing through a reflection on my parenting experiences, in light of relational

scholarship, I want to connect with my audience and further a multitude of understandings about parenting, childhood, relational scholarship and the world of connections we are embedded within.

Chapter 5 The Dualistic Logic of Sleep Training

It's perfectly clear that the millions of babies, who are crying at this very moment, want unanimously to be next to a live body. Do you really think they're all wrong? Theirs is the voice of nature. This is the clear, pure voice of nature, without intellectual interference.

(Liedloff, 1975, p. 206)

5.1 Introduction

In the relational scholarship informing this research, relationships among all 'beings' are assumed to be seamlessly interdependent and connective (Mathews, 2005; Plumwood, 1993; Rose, 2005). These connections are sustained through a dynamic and unrelenting flow of relational energy. This energy flow could be described as *social* – meaningful exchanges of give and take, facilitating deeper companionships and conflicts. Therefore, the circumstances governing the social congress of people likely reveal how we are relating to others on broader ecological scales (Muir et al, 2010; Plumwood, 2002). Plumwood (1993; 2002) utilised the male/female dualism to demonstrate that the human/nature dualism originated from a similar space of mastery and oppression. Likewise, in this chapter, I argue that sleep training infants (leaving infants to cry to achieve sleep) is yet another example of embedded dualism, one that may have relational repercussions for those infants and their caregivers involved in this practice.

Dualistic thinking allows for the mastery of one body over another for instrumental gain, despite their mutual dependency. While the dominating party benefits materially from dualistic relations, ultimately, the suffering of the oppressed leads to the degradation of both through their often unseen and unacknowledged connectivity. Dualistic thinking has deeply embedded itself in many aspects of modernity, and as I will argue in this chapter, its influence is evident in parenting. Dualism is a key threat to the kind of relationality envisioned by Mathews, Plumwood, and Rose, because it challenges the value of dependency and interdependence with others, and thus defines our ethical boundaries and the balance of power with interdependent kin (Plumwood, 1993; 2002).

In this research project I take a relational position to make my argument. As such, this work is not value-free, but supports the ontological values of the relational environmental philosophers Plumwood, Mathews, and Rose. In fact, it would be impossible to argue that we should be concerned about dualisms without presenting a particular perspective or view of reality from which to base that argument. My argument is not intended to vilify parents who sleep train their infants or uphold similarly aligned values. It is understandable that people make choices to enable them to survive materially and socially in the culture or situation within which they live. Parents may use sleep training to cope with the struggles and expectations of raising children in modernity. Indeed, this speaks to a greater existential crisis where parents may have been oppressed in their own formative years, and so lack certain relational knowledge and skills which would support more empathetic and responsive parenting. To challenge normative choices that are seen as private and personal can be quite confrontational. Nonetheless, parenting is as much a communal act as it is a personal one, and is informed just as much by shared and underlying

cultural beliefs as it is by personal circumstances (Jenni and O'Connor, 2005; Olza and MacDonnell, 2010). So, it is critical to the praxis of relational scholarship to question, no matter how contentious, how we nurture or hinder the relational capacities of future generations and ourselves in the process.

While I did not sleep train Evelyn, I did experience the sleep-related hardship that usually befalls new parents and subsequently so often precedes sleep training. This experience gave me insight into some of the cultural, social, and biological factors that might push people to sleep train their infants. Sleep training provides a comprehensive and illuminating example of parenting practices that are infused with dualistic logic. The attitudes that support sleep training also interconnect with other cultural attitudes of mastery and control. A consideration of these approaches is crucial for understanding the cultural premises of relational power relations. The following story details my introduction to night time parenting.

5.2 I Just Can't Stay Awake

(Composed from memories of before and just after Evelyn's birth in May, 2013)

As new parents we weren't really sure what to expect at night. I was familiar with the sleepless and exhausted new parent stereotype. This image was usually presented in a joking way, so I was not terribly worried about long nights. I was accustomed to doing all-nighters for my university studies, so I thought I was well prepared for night time antics. In my excited anticipation of Evelyn's emergence, I had her cot set up in our room many months before she was born. I had no particular feelings towards the cot. I assumed it was the standard sleeping space for babies. As far as I

knew, it was just a thing you put them in and they would sleep. I had not considered other sleeping options or that our relationship with this device would prove to be a problem. I even considered putting her in her own room without much concern, something that I could not even fathom once she was born.

On May 28th 2013, in the early hours of the morning, Evelyn was born healthy and strong. When we took Evelyn home from the hospital, all of my assumptions about infant sleep and the depth of my role collapsed. She was unable to sleep longer than 20 minutes in the cot, and fed every three hours. She would nurse for an hour and a half, I would change her nappy somewhere mid-feed, and then she would fall asleep. I would wait for her limbs to go limp (indicating she was deeply sleeping), then transfer her to the cot next to our bed. As soon as her body touched the mattress, she would coil into a ball, roll on her side, and inch-worm around the cot until she woke up. I would then be bouncing, patting, and rocking the cot to try and keep her asleep. Finally, when she would seem to be asleep, I would jump into bed and try to get to sleep as quickly as possible before the next feed. I would stare into the cot, paranoid about all of the weird grunting and gurgling noises she was making. I was unable to sleep on cue and under the pressure of knowing that I only had an hour of opportunity to rest. Then, just as I would start to relax, she would wake and the feeding cycle would begin again. I would drag my tired body out of bed and back to the rocking chair for more nursing. This went on for weeks. I ate sugary food night and day to help me stay awake and to comfort my anxiety. As a result, I gained a fair bit of weight within the first three months. My fitness was very low. I was depressed. I felt weak, cold, sweaty, and very uneasy.

Figure 2 - Surfing the internet while newborn Evelyn sleeps. Photo credit: Michael Cook.

Sometimes Evelyn slept in my lap and I would trawl the internet on my laptop for advice to help me solve the problem of needing to stay awake to feed her coupled with her inability to stay asleep in the cot. I could not blame her for not wanting to sleep in the cot. Why should she accept a hard, cold and lonely cot as a substitute for a warm, squishy, nourishing and protective parent? Bed-sharing seemed the most logical solution to sleep deprivation. Hook baby up to the boob, form a protective 'C' shape position around baby, and snooze and feed throughout the night with minimal arousal. In my internet trawling, I discovered the safe bed-sharing guidelines based on the seven risk factors for sudden infant death and sleep accidents; they seemed completely practical, intuitive and well informed. Rationally, bed-sharing seemed the biological norm, and with pre-planned risk management, I reasoned that it should be just as, if not more, safe than cot-sleeping. Emotionally, the sleep deprivation induced depression/anxiety mixed with post-baby hormones made me extremely terrified of hurting my newborn. I couldn't even walk through the house without terrorising myself with visions of all the horrible freak injuries she could sustain if I accidently fell down the stairs or banged her head on a door jamb. The sudden infant death pamphlet from the hospital, my doctor, nurses, family, news

articles, were all condemning bed-sharing as a dangerous practice, calling it reckless and akin to murder and abuse. I asked the community health nurse for advice. She told me to put her in the cot awake and pat and rock until she was asleep so she associates the cot with going to sleep. I had already tried this, and she did not sleep longer than 20 minutes, coupled with the dilemma that you have to be awake to rock and pat her to sleep in the cot. I was frustrated that not only did the 'system' instruct that babies must sleep in cots, but that bed-sharing was a 'very dangerous practice' and I would 'roll on-top of her'. So what am I to do?

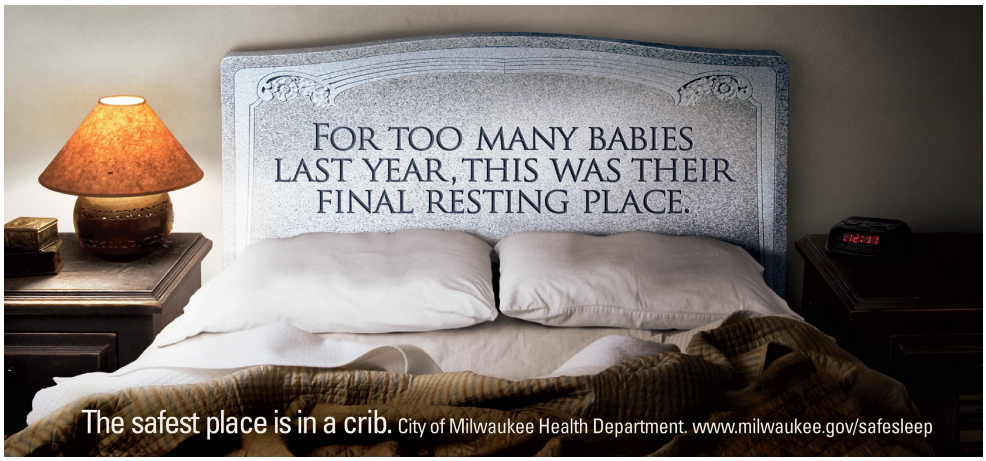

Figure 3 - An example of a bed-sharing fear campaign. Photo Credit: City of Milwaukee.

Then one night it all changed. Five weeks into parenthood, at 4am, unable to keep my eyes open, I involuntarily fell asleep while nursing Evelyn in the rocking chair, and slumped over on top of her. I suddenly woke in a panic and frantically checked her breathing, thankfully she was ok. I loudly sobbed to Michael (my husband) "I just can't physically stay awake any longer, what am I going to do?" I was totally exhausted and losing the battle to stay awake during night time feedings. Falling asleep on top of Evelyn in the rocking chair and smothering her had become a real danger. We had reached crisis stage, and I knew I needed a more sustainable solution now.

To help get myself out of this dilemma, I experimented with different ways to simulate bed-sharing without actually bringing Evelyn into our bed (which was a lumpy cotton futon, and not suitable for bed-sharing anyway). First, I sawed bars off the cot so I could get a hand and boob through. That was unfortunately awkward, and not very effective. Next, I had Michael go out and get me a foam mattress for the floor to provide me with a firmer/flatter surface (than our bed) so I could nurse Evelyn lying down, and therefore be less likely to harm her should I fall asleep. Of course, I did fall asleep, Evelyn did not get smothered, and it was rejuvenating! Unfortunately, the foam mattress was incredibly thin, cold, and uncomfortable and I was still grappling with fears of suffocation. I eventually stumbled across the side-car-cot set-up on the internet. So I removed the entire railing on one side of the cot and tied the frame to the side of our bed. I boobed her to sleep lying down with her in the side-car cot and me in my bed (although I spent a lot of time half in the cot), in a semi-bed-sharing situation. I felt that the restricted nature of the cot sides and extra space would keep me from rolling onto her, and thus ease my unfounded paranoia. I was hyper-vigilant about adhering to the safe bed-sharing guidelines, and knew that despite the taboo and paranoia, it was the safest option for all of us. I was no longer at risk of falling asleep on top of her in the rocking chair or having a sleep deprived accident (falling asleep in a soft chair is a risk factor for accidental death as babies can just wedged into crevices and cushions). I could easily feed her in the night without either of us having to rouse or move very much. Amazingly, she was also very quiet now, no longer gurgling, grunting or spewing in her sleep or inch-worming around the cot, and I could relax and sleep longer and more fluidly. I had no idea of how many times she nursed at night, because I didn't have to fully wake, nor did Michael or Evelyn. I didn't need to worry about keeping up the

abstract feeding-changing-feeding-sleeping pattern recommended by the hospital. We both slept lightly but peacefully, and we would rouse simultaneously if she needed feeding or comfort or if something was wrong. My depression and anxiety reduced significantly after the first restful night, and we had turned a corner.

My struggle with our night time sleep arrangements highlights the role of cultural imperatives in shaping personal experience. The rationalist opinion that I could kill my infant by bed-sharing contributed greatly to my anxiety, and prolonged my attempt to use a cot for solo-sleeping. The argument that bed-sharing was unsafe was perpetuated by those around me, but without context, experience, or balanced evidence, and yet I took it to heart. This is likely due, in part, to the uncertainty caused by changing hormones, lifestyle adjustments, cabin fever, inexperience and, of course, sleep-deprivation. When the input of others was in conflict with my own imperatives I became confused, desperate, and prone to making knee-jerk decisions, such as sawing the bars of the cot. The internet was my saving grace. It allowed me to access articles, forums, and other sources of information that suited my values. I was able to get support and practical information from people who had been in my situation. I was able to do my own research on the risks of bed-sharing by accessing the original literature through my university account. This electronic connection with others opened my eyes to all the different parenting philosophies around, and particularly directed me to the ones which suited my evolving values such as gentle parenting, attachment parenting, evolutionary parenting and synergy parenting to name a few. The internet provided a wealth of relational information and experience to which I would have otherwise had little access to.

I was both amazed at the power of bed-sharing and passionately angry about the impact of bed-sharing taboos and misinformation, including the presentation of solo sleeping as the only 'safe' sleeping option despite growing evidence to the contrary (Gettler and McKenna, 2010; McKenna and McDade, 2005). I can easily see how sleep accidents could happen when parents are ill-informed about safe bed-sharing, force themselves to stay awake until they suddenly involuntarily fall asleep with their infant in a dangerous position such as on the couch or in an unprepared bed, and so how they also contribute to the ongoing false impression that all bed-sharing is dangerous (McKenna and McDade, 2005). Alternatively, parents reaching crisis point would be more likely to accept extreme and medicalised sleep-treatments, such as to sleep train their infant. As I will uncover below, sleep training, as a culturally informed solution to the 'infant sleep problem', is one such practice that warrants deeper investigation from a relational perspective.

5.3 Sleep Training: A western solution to the 'infant sleep problem'

Difficulty getting to sleep and frequent night waking and feeding is common in the first few years of life. Biologically appropriate, yet often chaotic, infant sleep is commonly accompanied by parental sleep deprivation, conflicting advice, social pressure, confusion, frustration, and the search for a solution to the 'infant sleep problem' (Blunden et al, 2011; Gettler and McKenna, 2010; James-Roberts et al, 2006; Jenni and O'Connor, 2005; Owens et al, 1999).

Bed-sharing is usually an effective and biologically appropriate approach to adopt for balancing parent and infant needs at night, but it isn't a viable choice for everyone (Blunden et al, 2011; Gettler and McKenna, 2010; Jenni and O'Connor, 2005; McKenna and McDade, 2005; Thoman, 2006). Within the context of western culture and the circumstances of individual families, the decision to instigate solo-sleeping is usually informed by popular concerns such as a fear of creating 'bad habits', fostering dependency, exposing children to adult sexuality, 'spoiling' (or instilling laziness and disobedience), and/or risking sudden infant death or sleep accidents (Blunden et al, 2011; Crook, 2008; Jenni and O'Connor, 2005; McKenna and McDade, 2005; Solomon et al, 1993). Some parents simply find it uncomfortable sleeping next to a wriggly infant, while for others it is contrary to the mainstream western expectation that infants should be 'taught' to sleep independently and/or that parents should retain their pre-baby sleep space (Blunden et al, 2011; Jenni and O'Connor, 2005; McKenna and McDade, 2005).

Sleep training is one approach that solves the 'problem of infant sleep' while adhering to the popularised values and recommendations of mainstream western parenting. The sleep training of infants refers to the use of various 'extinction' techniques (referring to the gradual extinction of crying, including methods such as controlled crying or cry-it-out) to achieve hands-off infant 'self-settling', 'self-soothing' and resettling throughout the night (Blunden et al, 2011; France et al, 2003; Owens et al, 1999; Tortorella, 2013). Infants are placed in a cot, awake, and left to cry for prescribed lengths of time (such as 10 minute intervals, increasing intervals, or even left for up to 12 hours as described in Weissbluth (2005)) until sleep is achieved with minimal parental intervention. This is repeated at every sleep session until after a number of days or weeks, crying diminishes upon placement in the cot,

and the infant is able to self-settle and resettle throughout the night (France et al, 2003; Owens et al, 1999; Tortorella, 2013).

Sleep training is usually intensely stressful for both parents and children (Middlemiss et al, 2012). When sleep training fails to work, it's usually because parents 'give-in' to their child's cries (Blunden et al, 2011; France et al, 2003; Owens et al, 1999). Many public parenting centres and infant sleep schools support sleep-deprived parents with extinction techniques, particularly as clinical studies have demonstrated their effectiveness at achieving sleep (Blunden et al, 2011; France et al, 2003; Owens et al, 1999; Tortorella, 2013). There is little research available which considers the social, relational, psychological, cultural or physical outcomes of sleep training. This is likely because long-term outcomes, particularly relational ones, would be difficult if not impossible to measure as well as potentially unethical to study (Blunden et al, 2011; James-Roberts et al, 2006; Tortorella, 2013).

Independent infant sleep, which necessitates the use of sleep training for both practical and cultural reasons, is thought to have originated in Victorian Britain (Blunden et al, 2011; Crook, 2008; Jenni and O'Connor, 2005). Independent sleep emerged in response to the Christian values of discipline and privacy (ordering and segregating space and people) (Arnott and Brown, 2013; Crook, 2008; Jenni and O'Connor, 2005). Sleep time presented an ideal opportunity to 'teach' infants self-discipline, piety and obedience (characteristics valued by the church, as well as industry) by forcing independence, segregation and self-sufficiency (Boyce, 2014). This was thought to counter 'spoiling', where it was reasoned that too much indulgence in the dependency of infants and children made them lazy and disobedient subjects (Jenni and O'Connor, 2005; Solomon et al, 1993).

While independence and discipline were valued by Victorians for religious and governance reasons, those values were also useful as western countries began to industrialise. To 'succeed' (e.g. efficiently earn money) in industrialised societies requires one to be self-sufficient, obedient to employers or institutions, and disciplined in their work ethic. It's no wonder some industrial cultures still have underlying fears of dependency in children. They may want their children to be economically successful, and so hold onto the underlying fear that childhood dependency will reward laziness and create self-centred and economically unproductive adults (Blunden et al, 2011; Crook, 2008; Jenni and O'Connor, 2005). Likewise, a parent engaged in night time parenting may be more exhausted and less capable of being economically industrious, and therefore risk their family's survival (van Engen et al, 2012). The 'problem of infant sleep' was redefined by the social changes accompanying modernisation, such as the increase in working mothers and/or single parents who required a full night of sleep to juggle the demands of parenthood and employment (Etelson, 2007; Jenni and O'Connor, 2005).

In the mid-twentieth century, the rise of scientific reasoning enhanced the medicalisation of sleep, usually catering to behavioural tactics. These approaches considered infants as a set of behaviours, rather than as dynamically subjective and contextual individuals. Such views went hand-in-hand with the reason-focused, masterful attitude of dualistic thinking (Blunden et al, 2011; Plumwood, 1993; van der Horst et al, 2008). Kohn (2005) describes the behaviourist view of children:

> We see it also in programs that are intended to train little kids to go to sleep on their own […]. From the perspective of these programs, why a child may be sobbing in the dark is irrelevant. It could be terror or boredom or loneliness or hunger or something else. […] Experts who offer step-by-step recipes for "teaching" children to sleep in a

> room by themselves, […] are concerned not with the thoughts and feelings and intentions that give rise to a behavior, only with the behavior itself (Kohn, 2005, p.20).

In this mindset, responding to an infant's cry was considered a reward (Blunden et al, 2011; Crook, 2008; France et al, 2003). Rewarding a cry was tantamount to rewarding dependency or parental manipulation, which risked shifting the perceived power balance to the child. Consistently and persistently ignoring crying reinforces the parent's power to achieve independent sleep. At the turn of the 20th century, early sleep training pioneer Dr. Emmitt Holt suggested in his baby care manual how parents should respond to night time cries:

> One should get up and see that the child is comfortable—the clothing smooth under the body, the hands and feet warm, and the napkin not wet or soiled. If all these matters are properly adjusted and the child simply crying to be taken up, it should not be further interfered with. If the night cry is habitual some other cause should be sought. How is an infant to be managed that cries from temper, habit, or to be indulged? It should simply be allowed to 'cry it out'. This often requires an hour, and in extreme cases, two or three hours. A second struggle will seldom last more than ten or fifteen minutes, and a third will rarely be necessary. Such discipline is not to be carried out unless one is sure as to the cause of the habitual crying (Holt, 1907, no page numbers).

His approach exemplifies the enduring attitude that infant's needs can only be reasoned by adults, and are simple, knowable, and physical (such as cleanliness), and that crying is a form of manipulation that should not be responded to for fear of behavioural habituation. Referring to the infant as 'it', also indicates an understanding of infants as objects rather than as centres of subjectivity in their own right.

In the post-war period, a culture of detachment parenting persisted despite an understanding of the social value of mother-infant attachments emerging through Bowlby and Ainsworth's work on attachment theory (Ainsworth, 1989; Bowlby, 1988; Etelson, 2007; Leerkesa et al, 2010; Olza and MacDonnell, 2010; Swain et al, 2013; van der Horst et al, 2008). The growing focus on new clinical research defining idealised infant sleep helped to maintain extinction as a mainstream behavioural treatment for perceived sleep problems (Jenni and O'Connor, 2005). Unquestioned trust in clinically recommended extinction treatments enhanced the palatability and rigour of such practices, particularly as clinical prescriptions are assumed to be objective, true, and in everyone's best interest (Jenni and O'Connor, 2005). The demonstrated effectiveness of solving the sleep 'problem' with extinction techniques played a significant role in justifying its use (Blunden et al, 2011; France et al, 2003; Owens et al, 1999; Tortorella, 2013). The assumptions that define the need for such a technique, namely what constitutes a sleep problem, are based on the cultural definition of 'normal' infant sleep, which, as Jenni and O'Connor (2005) reveal, is often unrecognised by practitioners and researchers.

Owens et al (1999) reiterate that biologically appropriate infant sleep is clinically defined as a problem for both parents and infants, without recognition of the role of cultural imperatives, like cot use and solo-sleeping, in defining such problems. Furthermore, they maintain that routine-based sleep is 'normal', and that deviations from normal are damaging and to be treated with goal-orientated behavioural interventions, such as the removal of parental 'rewards':

> Clinicians are often asked for assistance in managing children's bed-time and sleep behaviour. This can range from problems with settling to sleep or night waking […]

> Disruptions to normal sleep routines can have serious effects on the wellbeing of both children and parents[…] (Owens et al, 1999, p.281).

They go on to conclude:

> Extinction is the theoretical basis for several different approaches to managing infant sleep disturbance. Extinction focuses on the way in which a child's problem sleep behaviours (e.g., bed-time resistance, signalling to the parents during settling or wakening at night) are being maintained by inappropriate parental attention. Removal of the rewarding consequence results in a rapid decrease in the problem behaviours. That is, the child is not attended to, once put to bed, unless the parents judge it to be absolutely necessary. Extinction is invariably used in conjunction with stimulus control, in that regular bed-time and pre-bed-time routines are established. Unmodified extinction has effectively reduced settling and night waking problems in both case-studies and experimental designs (Owens et al, 1999, p. 283).

Baby care manuals have also played a large role in the dissemination and up take of mainstream parenting practices, as well as giving parents a practical guide for administering different 'training' techniques. They are an accessible and trusted resource for concerned parents, particularly as many are written by white male doctors of medicine and psychology (Arnott and Brown, 2013; Jenni and O'Connor, 2005). There are numerous influential baby care manuals that advocate forms of sleep training. The earliest manuals are strongly focused on power and behaviourism, emphasising strict routines, moral codes, and discipline in the form of limiting loving contact between parent and child (Crook, 2008; Jenni and O'Connor, 2005; Rowold, 2013; Solomon et al, 1993). These include, *The Care and Feeding of Children*, (Holt, 1907), *Feeding and Care of Baby* (King, 1913), and *Psychological Care of Infant and Child* (Watson, 1928). In 1946, Dr. Benjamin Spock 'went against the grain' and

encouraged mothers to trust their instincts in the book *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* (Spock, 1946). While critics claimed that his methods were permissive and even helped to bring about the counter-culture of the 1960s, the manual still emphasised that children should not sleep with parents alluding to the concern that 'bad habits' would arise – he viewed 'giving in' to children's crying as weak parenting (Blunden et al, 2011; Morelli et al, 1992; Spock, 1945). In the later part of the twentieth century many of the most popular manuals were about solving problems of modernity, such as giving working parents more sleep, rather than overtly trying to embed a rigid social code of morals and discipline (Arnott and Brown, 2013; Sinal and Tikotzky, 2012). None the less, they still included the same themes of routine, distancing, and extinction around sleep times (Arnott and Brown, 2013; Blunden et al, 2011; Jenni and O'Connor, 2005). These manuals include, *Solve Your Child's Sleep Problems* (Ferber, 1985), *On Becoming Babywise: More Than a Survival Guide* (Bucknam and Ezzo, 1993), and *The Contented Little Baby Book* (Ford, 1999).

In the analysis that follows, I apply Plumwood's critique of modern dualistic thought as a logic of domination to that discourse found in a raft of modern sleep training literature. In particular, I refer to Tizzie Hall's (2009) book *Save Our Sleep*, which was often recommended to other parents in my parenting groups. This will allow me to explore in more detail the structure, sources, and implications of sleep training discourse and practice from a modern source. While Hall's (2009) guide is certainly more relaxed than earlier manuals (for example, 'spoiling' is not a concern here), strict routines and extinction, justified by a fear of dependency on parents at sleep times, are still prevalent means of control in the sleep training relationship.

This analysis is critical to the rest of the relational understandings developed in this thesis. It identifies that a dualistic logic permeates certain forms of parenting practices. Crisis situations, such as the one I describe in my own infant sleep narrative, may push parents to choose extreme solutions, justified by dualistic logic (e.g. such as rationalism, medicalisation, cultural norms, and so on). Indeed, the ways in which relational power is balanced and exercised here also features as a foundation for all of the other forthcoming relational analyses in this research project. In fact, this analysis provides an essential theoretical platform for considering the motivating tensions in many relational encounters.

5.4 Sleep Training and Plumwood's Five Qualities of Dualistic Relationships

As previously introduced, Plumwood (1993) describes dualistic relationships with five characteristic features: 1. Denial, 2. Hyperseparation, 3. Relational Definition, 4. Instrumentalism, and 5. Homogenisation. In the following analysis, these features become apparent in the way that parents and children are supposedly meant to relate to each other during sleep training. Plumwood (1993) often refers to the players in a dualistic relationship as the master (dominant, powerful, and oppressive) and slave (subservient or oppressed). The master is gendered as male, and the slave as female, in keeping with gender dualisms. The terms master and slave allude to the colonist tensions in history which have typified dualistic thinking, not just as a set of ideas, but as an expression of culture and justification for particular practices. I use these terms in my analysis to help me clearly identify the roles of the different players.

5.4.1 Denial

> Common ways to deny dependency are through making the other inessential, denying the importance of the other's contribution or even his or her reality, and through mechanisms of focus and attention. One way to do this is to insist on a strong hierarchy of activities, so that the denied areas are simply not 'worth' noticing (Plumwood, 1993, p. 48).

Dualisms are built upon the denial of the slave's qualities, which otherwise connect the lives of master and slave (Plumwood, 1993). The inherent interdependency of master and slave makes the domination and degradation of the slave eventually unfavourable for both, despite the master's immediate gains. The denial of mutual dependency through the rejection of the slave's 'human-like' or subjective characteristics (those apparent in the master) allows the master morally and practically to justify the use of his slaves. Plumwood (1993) identifies that an effective way of undertaking denial is to order and manage the activities of the slave, usually in a way that is rigid and abstract to conceal inherent common ground. A pre-conceived schedule helps the master to achieve his own goals through purposeful activities, and also serves to deny the self-determined patterns of the slave. The 'hierarchy of activities' secures the control of the master over the slave by turning interdependence into a one-sided managerial project (Plumwood, 2002).

Within sleep training discourses and practices, the 'hierarchy of activities' takes the form of a rigid schedule of feeding and sleeping. In modern forms of sleep training, such as that espoused in Hall's (2009) guide, the schedule is proposed as a means of making the infant's needs (identified as predominantly feeding and sleeping)

predictable and therefore easy for parents to manage (France et al, 2003; Hall, 2009; Owens et al, 1999). As Hall (2009) explains:

> I believe routines are very important and a big help to parents learning to interpret their baby's different cries. When following a routine, you will begin to distinguish between your baby's hungry, tired or bored cries because when she starts to cry, you will be able to look at the routine and see what is due next [....] My routines also help babies to feel safe and secure. Your baby will know that her needs are being met and she has no need to cry, resulting in a happy, contented baby (Hall, 2009, pp. 4- 5).

Hall's explanation supports the assumption that all of an infant's needs can be known and reasoned by an adult. These are understood to be quantifiable in terms of the timing around activities such as feeding, sleeping, and cleanliness, and can therefore be satisfied with a schedule of activities. Such a view denies that infants are subjective individuals in their own right, and have emotional, physical, spiritual, and/or social lives which are just as complex as that of any other being. Her approach is also centred on the presumption that infants welcome their management; that having their feeding and sleeping patterns abstractly controlled and timed gives them a sense of security, and that the infant's innate and dynamic patterns of bodily function are insignificant to the infant and/or the parent.

Sleep training schedules are proposed to meet all infant needs, reasoned by others as valid or not. Hall presumes that infants will not usually need to cry to demonstrate a need because they will be predictably catered to in the schedule, or if they do cry, parents can look to the schedule to identify the next scheduled need. Therefore, when infants are conceived as a simple set of 'needs' to be met, it can be reasoned by sleep

trainers that crying during sleep training is not significant because all 'needs' have been checked off, which thus justifies non-responsiveness.

As infants progress through treatment, they gradually begin to cry less at sleep times (Hall, 2009; Middlemiss et al, 2012; Owens et al, 1999). This reinforces the interpretation that the previous crying was just pointless 'protesting', and that the hierarchical schedule of feeding and sleeping was effective at addressing the infant's assumed needs. In contrast to this reasoning, Middlemiss et al (2012) demonstrated that sleep training conditions infants to *stop communicating* their stress (to stop crying) at sleep times. This finding suggests that the absence of crying in a sleep trained infant does not indicate the absence of external or internal experiences requiring social or physical intervention or connection, rather, infants just give up trying to communicate them.

Sleep training schedules deny that infants need or have the individual, contextual, responsive, spontaneous, and dynamic bodily patterns (in addition to feeding and sleeping) of a complex and connected person. They deny the value of social connectivity, contextual responsiveness, and validation, particularly at physically vulnerable times, such as during sleep (Blunden et al, 2011; Crook, 2008; Leerkesa et al, 2010). They deny that crying at sleep times could be indicative of a deeply emotional and very human response to being separated from a caregiver, or that such a response to separation is of any value. Sleep training denies parents the choice to respond empathetically and contextually towards their infants (except for scripted and timed responses, like patting the infant every ten minutes), because connective response is contrary to its goal of independent sleep. As Plumwood (1993) describes,

such thinking also denies the dependency of others on the master, valuing and pushing the slave's independence and self-reliance.

In stark contrast is an ethic of responding to the infant's communication with attentive presence of mind, taking in that particular individual's subjectivity in that moment, without needing to judge the value of such communication (e.g. is it a need or want?), but validating it in its own right. Such a dialogical ethic is espoused by Plumwood, Mathews and Rose, and considered from different angles in many of the proceeding chapters of this thesis.

5.4.2 Hyperspeparation

> A major aim of dualistic construction is polarisation, to maximise distance or separation between the dualistic spheres and to prevent there being seen as continuous or contiguous. Separation may be established by denying or minimising overlap qualities and activities, and by the erection of rigid barriers to prevent contact (Plumwood, 1993, p. 49).

Hyperseperation continues the process of separating the master from the slave, particularly in regards to their spatial connections. Masters reinforce the process of domination by physically separating themselves from the dwelling spaces of their slaves. This independence ensures that the process of domination is not undermined by accidentally re-connecting with the enslaved (Plumwood, 1993, 2002).

The sleep training agenda achieves the spatial hyperseperation of parent and child primarily through the use of cots and rooms. The goals of sleep training are only useful within the context of independent infant sleep. Therefore, the need for sleep

training is directly associated with the use of isolated and compartmentalised sleep spaces such as cots and separate rooms (Crook, 2008). Parents who use cots in separate rooms are obliged to fully rouse themselves, get out of bed, and walk across the house to re-settle or feed their infant periodically throughout the night. This can lead to sleep-deprivation, frustration and confusion. Instead of addressing the separation of parent and child, sleep training simply removes the obligation to respond. In bed-sharing cultures, such as practised in Japan, infant sleep is rarely viewed or experienced as a problem (Jenni and O'Connor, 2005). Many Japanese believe that supporting dependency while both awake and asleep is a valuable part of developing a socially interdependent person (Jenni and O'Connor, 2005; Morelli et al, 1992). Complex physical and social connectivity is consistently made available without the parent needing to interpret, reduce and identify the infant's condition (Jenni and O'Connor, 2005; Morelli et al, 1992).

In some cases, the fear of fostering 'bad habits' motivates parents to maintain physical and spatial hyperseperation from their infants (France et al, 2003; Owens et al, 1999). This may be reflective of the modern mistrust of emotions and other subjective means of communicating experience, in favour of objective and reasonable relational 'knowing', such as by identifying and treating behaviours (Plumwood, 1993). Hall (2009) claims that practices such as rocking, feeding, and providing any other social comfort to help infants to sleep is going to cause an undue burden for the parent.

> […] by the time your baby is twelve months old you could be getting up four or five times a night to rock him back to sleep between sleep cycles (Hall, 2009, p. 69).

Hall (2009) targets the infant as the source of the problem, irrespective of the role of separation (e.g. the cot and/or separate room) in intensifying that burden. Therefore, parents must maintain hyperseparation from their infants at sleep times because 'accidentally' connecting with infants in their places of dwelling may undermine the parent's control and the aim of sleep training to enforce independent sleep.

5.4.3 Relational Definition

> Although each is dependent on the other for identity and organisation of material life, this relation is not one of equal, or mutual, or equally relational, definition. The master's power is reflected in the fact that his qualities are taken as primary, and as defining social value, while those of the slave are defined or constrained in relation to them, often as negations or lacks of the virtues of the centre (Plumwood, 1993, p.52).

Once the master is sufficiently distanced from his slave, and the subjectivity of the slave has been convincingly denied, it becomes apparent to the master that their own reality is superior to that of the dominated. The qualities of the slave which do not conform to the master's ideals are viewed as an inherent flaw of the slave, or a negative reflection of the master, and a target of later instrumental 'fixing'. Indeed, the master may even reinvent a new identity for the slave based on his interpretations of the slave's reality (Plumwood, 1993, 2002).

Jenni and O'Connor (2005) argue that the biology of infant sleep is defined and situated within the context of culture, even by those that are presumed to be providing unbiased advice, such as medical practitioners and researchers. The

biological norms of the infant that do not adhere to cultural ideals are viewed as a medical disorder, or at the very least, as a temperament flaw reminiscent of 'spoiling' (Owens et al, 1999; Solomon et al, 1993). Such clinical disorders include the behavioural insomnia of childhood (difficulty getting to sleep) or sleep onset association disorder (requiring the help of another to sleep) (Blunden et al, 2011; France et al, 2003; Owens et al, 1999). As Hall (2009) warns:

> Also, be conscious that some babies think your sole purpose in life is to help him fall asleep (Hall, 2009, p. 19).

However, Hall (2009) thereby alludes to the belief that infants don't voluntarily conform to idealised independent sleep, and that communicating the need for social connection with a parent is manipulative and lacking virtue (Blunden et al, 2011; France et al, 2003; Jenni and O'Connor, 2005). Hall (2009) presents sleeping through the night as a skill learned through the process of sleep training and that it prevents 'serious sleep problems'. As she states:

> How to sleep for long periods by himself is one of the first skills you need to teach your baby. However, one in three children under the age of five does not have this skill and, out of these children, 30 percent are said to have a serious sleep problem (Hall, 2009, p. 20).

She illustrates that what constitutes a 'serious sleep problem' is defined by her own assumptions of what constitutes acceptable infant sleep – that infants should self-settle and sleep through the night – anything divergent to this is a 'serious problem'. She also believes that sleep is a *skill* to be taught, rather than an inherent bodily function that matures as a matter of course, therefore justifying the intellectual intervention of another person to 'teach' and shape such 'skills'.

The ways in which the masters inform themselves of the needs of their slaves cater to their own values and patterns of thinking. For instance, the 'problem of infant sleep', in most cases, is likely not a problem for infants, but a problem defined by adult stakeholders (Blunden et al, 2011; Jenni and O'Connor, 2005; Sinal and Tikotzky, 2012). This 'problem' originates from underlying cultural directives and is further reinforced by science and reasoning at the exclusion of subjective communication and knowing (France et al, 2003; Jenni and O'Connor, 2005; Owens et al, 1999). The objective master views his own form of knowing and understanding as 'best', for self and others (e.g. resonating with the old saying 'mother knows best'). Therefore, objective infant sleep prescriptions may aim to redefine the infant's identity and relation to the parent in line with rational adult ideals for them. This undermines instinctive, individual, contextual, and relational forms of understanding individual infants and their sleep.

5.4.4 Instrumentalism

> Although the relationship is usually presented as being in the interests of the dominated as well as the dominator, it is apparent that those on the lower side of the dualisms are obliged to put aside their own interests for those of the master centre, that they are conceived of as his instruments, a means to his ends (Plumwood, 1993, p.53).

The master wields his power to force the enslaved to conform to his cultural imperatives. Such forced assimilation, void of social connection, furthers the master's goals under the reasoning that it is beneficial to the enslaved because it superficially elevates their status to appear more like the master. In practice, assimilation benefits the master by reinforcing the assumption that 'master knows

best', that the master's culture is 'right' and 'true', and that others are objects like tools or instruments to meet his righteous ends (Plumwood, 1993; 2002).

As previously discussed, the 'problem of infant sleep' is most likely not a problem for individual infants. Sleep training is an instrumental means of forcing infants to conform to the parent's sleep culture. To justify the instrumental actions of sleep training, the parent must step in and interpret the infant, create their own reasoning about who and what their infant is, and act in ways which may be heavily shaped by culture and problem-solving agendas, irrespective of the qualities and reality of the individual infant (Crook, 2008; Jenni and O'Connor, 2005). With abstract interpretation comes many assumptions about what is or is not being communicated and why, whose reality is more important (the parent judges what a 'real' infant need is), followed by a new moral code to cater to the infant's adult-constructed identity (Jenni and O'Connor, 2005; Leerkesa et al, 2010).

When the parent and child are physically and/or emotionally distanced, parental interpretation of the infant and instrumental action based on those interpretations become a manifestation of adult mastery over the enslaved infant. The adults' interpretation of the infant is infused with their own wants and needs (such as wanting more sleep) and cultural directives (such as to avoid 'bad habits' or spoiling), and therefore justifies instrumental actions taken against the infant's condition, such as to sleep train. The ways in which the child's existence is shaped as a means to the ends of the parent is complicated by the parent's fundamental connections to the child. As Plumwood describes:

> Although some of the mother's interests entail satisfaction of the child's interests, they are not identical or even necessarily similar. There is overlap, but the relation is one of

> intentional inclusion (her interest is that the child should thrive, that certain of the child's key interests are satisfied) rather than accidental overlap (Plumwood, 1991, p. 20).

The parent produces the child, and is then obliged to care for the child so as to continue (at the very least) their own genetic lineage and uphold social and cultural expectation to care for one's own young. This occurs among many other possible layers of connection and benefit (such as emotional love and companionship) depending on the particular relationship. Therefore, when the parent encounters parenting situations which conflict with their own needs or expectations, in instrumentally dominating situations like sleep training, the child is then subject to instrumental treatments which suit the parents' reality and reasoning. In this way, parents can 'win' the perceived opposition, rather than working through relational struggles together, through encounter and dialogue.

5.4.5 Homogenisation

> More than polarisation is needed if a relationship is to be an appropriate one for domination. The dominated class must appear suitably homogeneous if it is to be able to conform to and confirm its 'nature'. In homogenisation, differences among the interiorised group are disregarded (Plumwood, 1993, p. 53).

The instrumental assimilation of the slave ensures that they conform to the master's culture to facilitate the master's ends. To apply a program of assimilation to the enslaved assumes that they are a mostly uniform and homogeneous group of subjects, or that there is little value in individual uniqueness. The program of assimilation will target their commonalities to both negate individuality as well as

reinforce homogenisation. Uniform groups are much easier for the master to manage as they are both more predictable and easier to manipulate (Plumwood, 1993; 2002).

Sleep training imposes a 'one size fits all' approach to infant sleep. It holds little regard for the individual qualities, patterns and needs of each individual child and family, and applies a set of specific and uniform rules to achieve the generalised goal of independent sleep (Crook, 2008; France et al, 2003; Jenni and O'Connor, 2005; Owens et al, 1999). Sleep trainers (who disseminate techniques through baby manuals) do not have a personal investment in (or knowledge of) the individual infants subjected to their programs. Sleep training regimes can only be conceived through generalising the child into a stereotyped creature or thing, which can then be slotted into the prescribed program by addressing those generalised qualities (such as waking frequently at night, or being dependent on a parent to get to sleep). Hall (2009) reflects the attitude that the generalised nature of the child is manipulative and in conflict with the parent's intentions:

> It's amazing just how clever babies can be. I have come across some babies who will try anything to get out of going to bed (Hall, 2009, p. 187).

Imposing a generalised regime on any infant prioritises a treatment of commonalities, over understanding individual infants *as they are*. As Jenni and O'Connor (2005) point out, many strictly imposed cultural sleep regimes do not allow for a 'best fit' of individual biology and cultural expectation, which in turn may hinder the social, emotional and physical development of children by contradicting their innate bodily functions and experiences. The homogenised identity given to infants by sleep trainers segregates them as a homogeneous kind of creature, warranting a different set of ethical considerations, and justifying a practice

which targets the sleep resistant qualities of their common nature. Within the realm of sleep training, there is very little, if any, consideration of the complex and subjective being of children and the ethical ramifications of such revelations (Blunden et al, 2011; Trevarthen, 2011).

These five qualities of dualism, as evident in the practice of sleep training infants, demonstrate that dualistic logic has permeated parenting practice as a cultural expression of underlying ontological and epistemological values. From this understanding I can begin to recognise and reveal dualistic logic in my own parenting experiences and relational assumptions. As I will continue to explore, parenting practices such as sleep training, while oppressive, are not necessarily easily defined in terms of 'good' and 'bad' or 'right' and 'wrong'.

5.5 The Paradox of Relational Connectivity vs. Boundaries

Sleep training can sometimes also be understood as a social *boundary* that is done for everyone's best interest. The rationale behind this view is worth deconstructing in order to better understand some of the underlying assumptions of sleep treatments. One of the tenets of this view is that *if* the parent is mindful and validates the child's discomfort during treatment, then it is a respectful and justified practice that benefits the parent and therefore the child. This view assumes that validating the child's experience provides relational respect and justification, and that if the treatment benefits the parent then it will also benefit the child through having a more rested parent during the day and/or because the child may get more sleep.

While presence of mind and validation of another's reality is in line with practices of mutual respect as suggested by Plumwood, Mathews, and Rose, to use them as justification for any treatment is potentially dangerous as it fails to consider the ethical merit of the practice itself and what constitutes mindfulness and validation to the person undergoing treatment. If an infant cries when physically separated from a parent, does verbal validation (e.g. "I see you are upset when I leave") and the mindfulness to make such a reflection on their infant's feelings, make much difference to an infant who may or may not fully understand the meaning behind verbal validation, particularly when it is *physical* disconnection that instigated crying?

This view is also fraught with desires for perfection. There is perhaps an underlying goal that adults and children should get perfect sleep to be perfect people, whether that is defined scientifically, medically, or personally, which goes hand-in-hand with a fear of suffering or failing. I would suggest that perhaps there is relational meaning and learning when things are not perfect, and that the tensions caused by a lack of perfection can spark relational and personal growth.

As I came to understand during previous research on the relationality of mutualistic gut bacteria (Cook, 2012), boundaries are a critical part of mutual relationships as they protect players from hurting each other, whether intentionally or by accident. A significant part of parenting (as I see it) is helping new people to navigate the boundaries of self and others. Appraising the value of sleep related boundaries underpins the psychoanalytical and developmental theories of medicine and science. So then, is sleep training a valid relational boundary to prevent harm to either or both parties?

To answer this question, we first have to determine the scope of a parent's responsibility to the *connectivity* of their children. If a child voices unease about being disconnected from a parent at sleep times, is the role of the parent to maintain relational connectivity until the child moves away in their own time, or is it relationally justifiable for a parent to place disconnecting boundaries at sleep time to protect themselves and therefore the relationship as a whole? Is there a middle ground in which a parent slowly encourages independence without the sudden disconnect of a sleep training event? Or, should parents reshape their expectations and modify supporting environments to ease their own suffering with little interruption the child's individual patterns (e.g. let them be, and take full responsibility for one's suffering)?

As discussed above, part of the parental harm suffered around infant sleep is likely linked to the cultural need for infants to sleep alone, in cots and/or separate rooms, in the first instance. Therefore, we first need to question the cultural imperative to insist on independent infant sleep. As such, if the 'problem of infant sleep' is not seen as the fault of the child, but rather (in many cases) is deemed a relational struggle instigated by cultural imperatives for independent sleep within the context of particular individuals and environments, then the child is not violating a parent's boundary, they are merely living their biological imperatives within the reality they were born into. These imperatives usually require the connectivity and care of another person to be fulfilled. I would argue that the basic tenet of parenting is to provide connectivity which supports children as they move into the world in their own time. If a child voices that they are not ready for disconnection, then forcing disconnection to prevent another kind of harm is akin to 'throwing the baby out with the bath water'. As Rose (2002) describes, a dialogical ethic is a *responsibility* to be

open and responsive with others. As such, the ethic is not to uphold particular moral rules; rather, the ethic is to be engaged in the moment and context of the relationship. Likewise, Plumwood (1991) asserts that maintaining connectivity is an individual responsibility of caring for others:

> With nature, as with the human sphere, the capacity to care, to experience sympathy, understanding, and sensitivity to the situation and fate of particular others, and to take responsibility for others is an index of our moral being. Special relationship with, care for, or empathy with particular aspects of nature as experiences rather than with nature as abstraction are essential to provide a depth and type of concern that is not otherwise possible. Care and responsibility for particular animals, trees, and rivers that are known well, loved, and appropriately connected to the self are an important basis for acquiring a wider, more generalized concern (Plumwood, 1991, p. 7).

Care, in this instance, is the maintenance of mental/physical/metaphysical connection to each other *through struggle*, rather than disconnection to end the struggle. The instigation of parental boundaries can conflict with responsibilities of parental connectivity and care. To know what boundaries align with the premises of relationality requires the deconstruction of every instance within unique contexts. Even then, there may be no clear 'answers'.

Of course, this is a philosophical argument, within the context of each individual family living the messy nuances of such an experience, the argument may be different. I was able to maintain connectivity with my infant and survive by bed-sharing, but this may not be the experience of others. Sleep training to prevent serious sleep related harm to the parent, in modern contexts, may indeed be preferable when all else fails to save the parent for serious harm, and therefore the relationship as a whole, even if the practice in-and-of itself is oppressive to the child.

As with many aspects of relationality, the resulting ethic of care may depend on the nuances and severity of the individual's experiences within their own concept of reality, and will never be perfect in practice.

The question of a parent's responsibility (or that of any other caregiver in a position of power) to the connectivity of their infant is at the heart of relationality, yet such questioning highlights a paradox between connectivity and boundaries. These deconstructions also question to what extent we strive for perfection and ideals in our relationships, or allow relationships and struggles to unfold in their own time and find relational meaning and learning in their difficulty. This is a paradox with no universal answers, but rather philosophical leanings to maintain connectivity and struggle together, rather than 'fix' those in our care.

5.6 Conclusion

Sleep training infiltrates a fundamental social relationship with intellectual and managerial imperatives reflective of Plumwood's five qualities of dualistic relationships. The decision to pursue sleep training is much more than just a casual personal choice, but is compounded by cultural and historical imperatives, forms and sources of parenting knowledge, and external pressures (such as economic pressures) (Crook, 2008; Plumwood, 1993; 2002). Dualistic culture serves to further the modern interests and authority of science, which are tangled amongst the motivations for practicing sleep training. Sleep training offers parents a reasoned and objective solution to the socially constructed 'problem of infant sleep'. This approach institutes

a one-size-fits-all and intellectually abstracted regime to change ‘problematic’ bodily patterns (Jenni and O’Connor, 2005).

Developing the capacity to form deep and complex understandings of others requires relational participation and experience (Rose, 2008). Sleep training negates mutual participation and experience through systematic silencing. The achievement of idealised infant sleep, through the dis-synchrony of crucial social bonds, must come with some level of relational cost, especially to the empathetic and communicative abilities of both parent and child (Leerkesa et al, 2010; Olza and MacDonnell, 2010; Swain et al, 2013). It is imperative then, that those promoting the ideals of relational scholarship question parenting practices, attitudes, values, and circumstances which may embody dualism – for both those who utilise its practices and those who are subjected to them.

Don’t stand unmoving outside the door of a crying baby whose only desire is to touch you. Go to your baby. Go to your baby a million times. Demonstrate that people can be trusted, that the environment can be trusted, that we live in a benign universe.

(O’Mara, 1997, p. 6)

Chapter 6 Negotiating Caregiver Power

It has been said that absolute power corrupts absolutely. That is true in our homes as well as in our world. To raise peaceful humans we need to be peaceful humans. There is no other path to peace than peace.

(Knost, 2013, no page number)

6.1 Introduction

Sleep training provides a very potent and somewhat clear-cut example of dualistic logic in modern parenting. While analysing the power relations of sleep training, I began to wonder how dualistic logic has penetrated other, more mundane parental power struggles over such matters as where to go (or not), with whom, wearing what clothes, and at what times. These everyday instances where parental control is evidenced are usually focused on safety (such as keeping your child from running into traffic), utility (such as getting your child into the car to go shopping), and social expectation (such as putting clothes on). Children are unique individuals, but they are also highly dependent upon caregivers to keep them alive and help them navigate the world. Caregivers are usually physically and cognitively more powerful. In turn, a biological parent is dependent on their child (in most cases) to continue their genetic lineage, which is reinforced by the more apparent benefits of parenting such as love, attachment, fulfilment, and companionship.

The physical and cognitive 'weaknesses' of children might make them vulnerable to manipulation by others. Many times we make decisions for our children that may be at odds with their realities, whether we know it or not. This does not imply that the child or anyone else universally knows what is best for self or other in any given situation, but that in making decisions for someone else, in giving care to someone who is 'weaker', there is the chance of conflicting interests and the abuse of power. Care-giving presents a potentially easy opportunity for dualistic practices/attitudes to be utilised to enforce the position of the stronger party – whether the stronger party is aware of it or not (his/her taken-for-grantedness of this situation is innocuous, particularly so if they believe without question that their position is 'right' and 'true').

On the flip-side, in an attempt to avoid oppressive and dualistic parenting practices, a parent may assume that *all* parental control is inherently dualistic, and so slide into an equally unbalanced permissive relationship which allows the child's domination of the parent, which is to their mutual detriment and/or deprives the child of valuable guidance, protection, and leadership. Parents are thus in a complicated situation of determining *how to utilise their power, and for what ends*. In this chapter, I will cultivate an understanding of theories of 'self' and 'other', explore how relational participants (such as parents and children) may achieve solidarity where abilities and qualities are not equal, including in my own parenting situations where control may or may not have been oppressively dualistic.

6.2 The Currency of Control

(This story was composed from journal notes in June and July 2014. Evelyn was approximately 13 months old)

Getting Evelyn dressed was one of our most common battles. She started to resist getting dressed at around one year of age, which only intensified as she became more capable and self-assured. It came to my attention that our battles were a result of different priorities. I wanted her to get dressed, she wanted to be naked. Who is right?

Figure 4 - Evelyn, about 14 months old, happily throws off her clothes to run naked. Photo credit: Kaseen Cook

I would say, "Let's put your clothes on so we can go in the car".

She shouts, "No!"

So I try another tactic - make it fun, "Weeee! Rocket booster pants ready for take-off!"

"Noooo!"

I rethink my approach, "Ok, how about you help me put your clothes on. Show me your dressing skills."

"NOOOO!"

I start to get annoyed and insist, "Sorry, but you have to get dressed. We can't go to the shops naked."

Evelyn sobs loudly, "Nooooo!!!", then drops to the ground like a wet noodle.

Where do we go from here? My first thought is just to force the clothes on. I'm stronger than her, and it's an easy solution. So, I try it out:

"Ok, here comes your shirt, I'm going to pop it on your head"

As soon as I start to force it on her, she begins to scream and kick, and her resistance intensifies. I don't feel comfortable with this and back off. Doubt starts to creep in. If she gets her way, then won't she grow up to be an entitled monster? In the back of my mind I can feel the pressure of culturally engrained fears and assumptions coming to the surface. Such as, 'good' children obey adults, and resistance indicates that she's a 'spoiled brat' - logic that I remember believing without question before having my own child. I automatically feel that I am entitled to enforce my way, because I am the adult, I know best. My way is supposedly for the common good, for her good, so she doesn't get cold, so we can go to the store, but her reaction makes me feel like an oppressive tyrant. This doesn't feel right. Shouldn't she be entitled to the same respect for her reality as any other person? Why are my priorities more important than hers?

Then I wondered, how can I make our priorities the same? Or more so, how I can I get her to willingly do what I want without feeling like a cruel dictator or just give up entirely and let her run naked through the shops – surely there is a diplomatic middle ground.

I say to Evelyn, "Let's do a trade. You get three choc chips if you get dressed. Trade choc chips for clothes".

Her eyes light up, and she says in agreeance, "Choc!"

Priorities merged! She happily lets me dress her.

I then realised that my version of diplomacy is actually just bribery. I paid for her compliance with chocolate currency. Or worse, I was manipulating her with sugar to meet my own ends without consideration of why she did not want to get dressed in the first place. In essence, my approach may be no different from using punishment, but instead of using fear as a motivator I used rewards. Can both our priorities be balanced without manipulation, or is this just not possible? Am I, as the parent, obliged to force my own imperative just to 'get the job done', even if it is sugar coated?

The next time I approached Evelyn to get dressed I thought I would experiment with a different approach. I would put my expectations out on the table, and then back off and let her meet them in her own time, with her own reasons.

I started with the usual, "Time to get dressed so we can shop."

She replied, "NOOO!"

So I casually said, "Ok, when you're ready.", and put the pants down on the floor next to her, and we went back to what we were doing.

Five minutes later, Evelyn picks up the pants, and she asks me "Pants?"

I happily reply, "Sure cutie, let's get those pants on."

Without the pressure of my prodding, engaging in conflict, or the use of sugary manipulation, she chose to get dressed and accept my guidance. Perhaps, in this case, to meet social expectation or maybe she is more likely to cooperate when she feels understood, given the power of choice (requested instead of demanded), and is not under attack, or possibly she was just motivated to go to the store.

My previous approaches to getting dressed assumed that she did not want to 'fit-in', that she wanted to be resistant and uncooperative, to engage in battles for power. I assumed that getting dressed was about power, mine over hers, and that to get her dressed I needed to 'win' the encounter. Such interactions, which I had tried to manage as conflicts or contestations, are perhaps instead better approached by providing leadership that would support Evelyn's desire to connect, and accept that sometimes my leadership would also be questioned. Social processes take time. It would seem likely that children also strive for acceptance amongst others because, after all, others provide them with identity, nourishment, and protection. Subsequently, I realised that it was perhaps my attitude and assumptions about Evelyn's motivations that could make all the difference between my providing leadership or wielding force and manipulation in our interactions. Of course, that's not to say that we didn't still butt heads on occasion about getting dressed. However, it did highlight for me the importance of recognising different subjectivities in terms

of their relational connection, rather than opposition, as evidenced here regarding the issue of control in care-giving.

6.3 The Perils of Doing Runners

While theoretically and practically complicated, mutually supportive relationships are possible - given enough time and understanding – as revealed here with such mundane matters as getting dressed, but what about those involving significant risk?

(This story is composed from journal notes from December 2014. Evelyn is approximately 18 months old)

When Evelyn was about a year and a half old she suddenly became interested in 'doing runners' (e.g. running away from me, especially in public). She would not want to hold my hand when we were out walking, and would start to tantrum if I insisted that she stay with me. One afternoon we had just finished having tea at Nan's house, and we were walking back to the car. Nan's house was near a moderately busy main road, and so I insisted that she hold my hand as we walked to the car. She wanted to walk by herself, and became frustrated. She started screaming and thrashing about, and broke free of my grip. She bolted towards the road, and I ran after her, grabbing her shirt, tripping on my untied shoe, and hitting the pavement just before the road, dragging Evelyn down with me. She started crying and we hugged as I carried her back to the safety of the car. Driving away, I was uneasy thinking about what could have happened if she had run into the road. From that moment on, any notion of giving Evelyn a choice about holding my hand around risky situations was gone. Furthermore, if she was in a bad mood and likely to fight

me, I insisted that she be carried, and so better restrained. Even if she resisted and I felt bad, I told her I was sorry, but that I would be restraining her around cars and roads for her own safety. I cannot reasonably leave such life-and-death decisions to my toddler.

It would seem, I decided, that I was destined to use forceful and undemocratic control at least in some instances of parenting in order to maintain the bigger picture, prioritising Evelyn's safety. I do not trust my negotiating skills or Evelyn's impulse control adequately enough to chance her getting hit by a car, and so I enforce my control over dangerous situations to its fullest degree. The best I can offer Evelyn is empathy for her situation by trying to reflect to her that I understand why she is frustrated.

6.4 Reflexive Analysis

The power struggles between me and my daughter have never occurred in a vacuum, but within a landscape of material things, symbols, and values. I require Evelyn to wear clothes because public nudity is generally not acceptable in our culture. We also live in a mild climate, and the contrast in temperatures and weather conditions amongst spaces highlights not only the need for protective coverings for our bodies, but that outside of contained spaces we have to use clothes to maintain our comfort. It's likely that at the time, Evelyn was too inexperienced with different spaces to understand the need for clothing to maintain comfort – perhaps going out in the nude would have helped that learning. We also have vast technological developments to thank for making cheap and fashionable clothes readily available. I cannot deny that I may have also been motivated to dress Evelyn because of the 'cuteness factor', and

because I enjoy buying her clothes. Perhaps, in a different climate and culture, she would have had the choice to be naked.

Likewise, we live in a rural location where cars are the main mode of transport. Indeed, automobility is especially predominant in Australia, and in our towns and cities there are cars continuously being driven, parked, and manoeuvred amongst a vulnerable traffic of pedestrians. The urban morphology, systems of governance, and technological advances that have made housing and transport infrastructure possible, all contributed to the encounter described above and in which I had to restrain Evelyn. Experience, focus and impulse control are important skills to keep you alive around cars, and something that still requires development in most toddlers, necessitating their parental protection. Safety is also culturally valued and emphasised in the western world - what Ulrich Beck termed a 'risk society' (Beck, 2009). Such states sometimes include a great deal of associated fear and anxiety, as I have experienced, heightened by many horror stories in the media. Indeed, fear of something horrific happening to our children can be an overwhelming instigator for wielding forceful parental control. Deciding which risks to modify, and how to go about doing it, can be relationally difficult and complicated.

Evelyn's defiance reminds me that she is an individual person, and I cannot fully control her, at least not without a fight. She has her own preferences, her own ideas, her own interpretations of the social and material world around her, and she acts accordingly. To dominate her will and replace it with my own, to meet my ends, feels tantamount to the motivations of oppressive control. Yet, there are many things she has yet to learn, and as a parent I feel my role is to provide safety, nourishment and guidance, which I assume she cannot provide for herself. Of course, as she is

unfamiliar with our wider culture and worldly dangers, my role as a parent, at least in part, is to provide leadership to help her fit-in and stay safe. If she does not understand the purpose of some of my directives and resists them, then how do I negotiate the application (or suspension) of my power, and to what or whose ends?

This question is critical within the context of relational scholarship because interdependent kin are rarely equal in physical, mental, and other capacities, and so the delicate dance of relational exchange can be vulnerable to domination by the 'stronger' party. I am wary of modelling and practising mastery in my parenting, yet I also need some degree of control while Evelyn still requires social and material guidance and protection. Such is the nature of the caregiver paradox.

6.5 Plumwood's Concepts of Self and Other

Concepts of self and other can be used to reveal the underlying tension of the caregiver paradox described above. Both parent and child have a notion of their own 'self' as well as of the 'other' formed in relation to the 'self' (and vice versa) which guides the qualities of the power relation produced by and between them. The self-other binary is fundamental to identity-formation and therefore critical to understanding many other oppositional pairings, such as male/female, human/nature, and parent/child (Plumwood, 1991).

Plumwood's (1991) concepts of self and other are clearly demonstrated in her critique of deep ecology. Deep ecologists have identified three conflicting forms of self: indistinguishability, the expanded self, and the transpersonal self. All of them carry elements of dualistic logic through their oppositional and universalising

qualities. For example, some deep ecologists, such as Fox (1984), view the sharp yet artificial division between humans and nature as problematic, but then respond with the equally oppositional variant of the self based on indistinguishability – where humans and nature are literally without any differences or definition (see Fox, 1984, 1990). Plumwood (1991) argues that this version of selfhood is far too powerful and general. Individual distinctiveness does not cause dualistic opposition, and in fact, a unique self is critical to both the creation of and resilience of reciprocal relationships. The greater the diversity of distinct individuals, the more opportunities there will be among these individuals to create connections where each provides a unique kind of support to others, while also receiving something they do not possess themselves.

Similarly, as another version of selfhood, the expanded self also undermines the uniqueness of individual selves (Plumwood, 1991). With the expanded self, the self is posited as 'something' that we identify with, and so if we identify with others (such as through empathy), then they also become self – and so then our concept of self expands to *incorporate* others as self (Fox, 1986; 1990). This assumes that self-interest (egoism) negates reciprocal relationality, and that the opposite - self-sacrifice - is required (Plumwood, 1991).

Boundaries created by individuals to prevent the exploitation (intended or not) of one's self are considered self-interested, yet are critical to maintaining the wellbeing of the self, and by extension, the relationship as a whole. For example, I do not let Evelyn hit me when she is angry, and so I help her to mediate this impulse by blocking her. This self-interested boundary protects my physical body as well as my connection to Evelyn, as I would soon come to dislike and avoid being around a child that hits me.

Mutualistic bacteria in the human intestine provide a clear example of the critical importance of relational boundaries for maintaining mutuality. For example, the human gut has developed a finely adapted mucus layer in response to diverse bacterial activity to prevent bacteria from exploiting (digesting) the lining of the intestine, which would severely harm or kill the person and undermine the reciprocal relationship between person and gut bacteria (Macpherson et al, 2009).

Within such reciprocal relationships, it is to the advantage of both participants for each to protect essential self-interests, and thus protect their role within the relationship from degradation by others. Deep ecology's expanded self assumes that participants will be able to both know the detailed nuances of the other's weaknesses, *and* be able and motivated to protect them from (intentional or unintentional) exploitation (Fox, 1986; 1990). Such relationships, void of self-interest, would be very vulnerable to disturbance, if not impossible to sustain. Self-interest is essential for reciprocal relationality, but needs to be tempered dialogically and contextually.

Plumwood's (1991) critique of deep ecology also includes a critical appraisal of the concept of the self as a transpersonal self that seeks to identify the self as embodied in the universe by rejecting personal attachments, concerns, and emotions (much like the Buddhist perspective on avoiding suffering e.g. Fox, 1990; Immergut and Kaufman, 2014; Plumwood, 1991). For example, Immergut and Kaufman (2014) argue that anxiety and threat (felt by the self in relation to others) are symptomatic of a dualistic logic. Concerns about self-esteem and self-appraisal, for example, exhibit anxiety about, and sensitivity to, the perceptions and judgements of others. In this situation, the self cannot be defined without its dualistic or oppositional pairing with an other. Self is always in competition with the other to secure resources without

costs, such as criticisms from others. Since this dynamic is taken by Immergut and Kaufman (2014) to be infused with dualistic logic, they propose the Buddhist-inspired concept of a transcendent 'no-self' as an alternative to the anxious-self:

> In contrast to sociology, the self in Buddhism is understood as an illusion or, in more traditional terms, ''no-self'' (*anatta* in Pali). The self is merely a label projected onto the bundles of constantly changing psycho-physical elements called the *khandas* in Pali. Thoughts, feelings, moods, attitudes, physical parts, or movements of the body are all simply changing, impersonal interactions that arise and pass away. To identify with them, to hold on to them, or cling to them as ''my self'' only invites suffering according to Buddhism because we are trying to stabilize what is inherently not stable (Immergut and Kaufman, 2014, p. 272).

In their interpretation, the self is viewed as a social construct, a non-solid reality, and because it arises out of dependence, the self cannot exist as an independent agent. No-self is constantly embedded in the dynamic of relationality, and thus attachment to a stable self creates suffering (Immergut and Kaufman, 2014).

This account of the self, while reflective and revealing, assumes that suffering is inherently 'bad', and therefore if something such as attachment to others or to materials causes suffering, it should be discarded. To assert that socially constructed concepts of the self facilitate oppression and suffering, and that such suffering should be rejected, and then to propose an equally oppositional concept, the no-self, seems again to overshoot the messy and complex encounters of living relationships. How else can we meaningfully understand others if all social constructs are false and rejected? To be social with others, and not just human others, we need some means of interpreting and understanding sensory input. Therefore, to reject the social construct is to reject the opportunity to understand self and other in manifested social

contexts. Imposing a single social construct on others who construct understandings of relationships differently *is* oppressively dualistic, not the social construct itself. The rejection of the self by replacing it with the concept of the no-self, is also a social construct, as it is a means of understanding the construction of social existence. It would seem impossible to escape the existence of social constructs when engaged in interdependence, just as it is impossible to escape the unique subjectivity of individuals unless, of course, we transcend social relationships altogether, which appears implausible as well.

Furthermore, the anxious-self need not be dualistic. Anxiety, like suffering, internally pushes the relational process of reflecting upon and understanding one's connections to others. It may also reveal threats and vulnerabilities within oneself, or perhaps flag situations where connections with others are under threat from the actions of self or other. The ability of both individuals to identify and respond to threats helps both of them to maintain empathetic barriers which prevent exploitation. We need to identify with the "[…] thoughts, feelings, moods, attitudes, physical parts, or movements of the body […]" (Immergut and Kaufman, 2014, p. 272) to be able to reflexively understand them and why they arise when we connect with others, and to potentially change them if they are not in line with mutual intentions.

The concept of the transcended self seeks to rise beyond being merely human, to be something free from earthly connections associated with suffering, such as the suffering inflicted by being oppressed by or by oppressing others. As Plumwood (1991) argues, this concept lacks an understanding of the central role of unique social

dynamics, particularly of attachment to others (and the associated suffering), in facilitating reciprocal relationships:

> Because this "transpersonal" identification is so indiscriminate and intent on denying particular meanings, it cannot allow for the deep and highly particularistic attachment to place that has motivated both the passion of many modem conservationists and the love of many indigenous peoples for their land (which deep ecology inconsistently tries to treat as a model). This is based not on a vague, bloodless, and abstract cosmological concern but on the formation of identity, social and personal, in relation to particular areas of land, yielding ties often as special and powerful as those to kin, and which are equally expressed in very specific and local responsibilities of care (Plumwood, 1991, pp.15-16).

Likewise, the strong attachment I share with my daughter retains many of the connections of our relationship, even if we encounter conflict or suffering. The intangible attachment between myself and my daughter *does* cause a great deal of suffering and worry, but that does not mean that I want to transcend beyond our attachment for fear of the suffering caused by it. On the contrary, it motivates me to use that suffering to make our relationship stronger, to build greater empathy and understanding of myself, of her, of our connections with each other and of those with others beyond us.

To transcend suffering and attachment is to move towards dualistic oppression and away from reciprocal relationality – if you do not deeply feel relational disconnection, then what motivation will you have to maintain connectivity with others? In the practice of sleep training, parents are conditioned to ignore the gut-wrenching pull of their infant's cry. In this situation, there is an attempt to transcend the suffering caused by the parent's attachment to their infants by reasoning it away

and ignoring it. To become numb to the suffering of both self and other is to pave the way for dualistic instrumentalism to meet some new abstract ends (such as independent sleep in the case of sleep training). Those that benefit from oppression may lack an adequate level of attachment to the oppressed (both seen and unseen) to truly feel suffering (and do something about it) when their own wellbeing is threatened by such oppression (Mathews, 2003; Plumwood, 1991).

From this overview, I resonate with Plumwood's view that we are not just self and other (a term indicating a singular perspective of the world from self), but one self, one centre of subjectivity, considering the world and subjectivity of other selves, seeking understanding and awareness of a connection without compromising core individuality or self-interest. As Plumwood (2002) relates:

> We need a concept of the other as interconnected with self, but as also a separate being in their own right, accepting the 'uncontrollable, tenacious otherness' of the world as a condition of freedom and identity for both self and other (Plumwood, 2002, p.201).

Moving beyond the oppositional and exploitative dualisms of self and other should not entail scrapping the notion of self, of being different from others, or of having self-interests. In fact, retaining and understanding individuality, in concert with relational connections, gives strength and resilience to our relationships with kith and kin.

Having a position or concept of self and other aligned with the tenets of relational scholarship is essential for understanding when one's control of the other in care-giving is oppressive or mutually supportive. Control may not be dualistic when it delineates self from other with empathetic boundaries or limits, validates and

respects the uniqueness of self and other, and protects self-interests from exploitation. It is likely, depending on circumstance, that these qualities of control may be indicative of leadership, and protect and promote relationality, rather than degrade it.

6.6 Standing in Solidarity, Leadership

The concept of solidarity is also helpful to further an understanding of the nuances of mundane, yet very complex, power conflicts between self and other. Solidarity describes a form of unity amongst and/or between individuals and communities, usually defined by certain ethical obligations (Mallory, 2009; Scholz, 2008; 2013). Solidarity can be social (individuals joined by commonalities), civil (such as justice), and/or political. Political solidarity arises when a group of individuals join to challenge a particular injustice, and create bonds among each other to achieve a particular goal, such as found in a political or social movement (Scholz, 2008; 2013). The stronger the bond among members, the more likely individuals will be to respond to one another with moral consideration. Individuals in this group each take part in reflexive practice, recognising their own role and experiences with the injustice, so as to understand and further their collective cause by assembling a diverse range of perspectives (Scholz, 2013).

Mallory (2009) questions whether the language of political solidarity can be accurately and effectively utilised in describing the solidarity of human and non-human spheres. While she does not really answer this question (although she tends to

favour Plumwood's (2002) argument that non-human others can be political), she observes:

> Political solidarity for Plumwood is a relation in which one (or, as is more suitable for our purposes, the collective) does not claim an identification with the other—political solidarity describes a relation in which beings are motivated to act on behalf of others with whom one admits one does not (necessarily) share experiences, interests, worldviews, or subjectivity. However, those standing in solidarity become joined both with the object of solidarity and others involved in struggling for change through the shared recognition of injustice and oppression and through acting to change it (Mallory, 2009, p. 8).

Scholz (2008) believes that political solidarity between humans and non-humans is not possible due to the lack of cognitive reasoning in non-humans (and hence their ability to identify with and act on common political causes). She attests that political solidarity is a human concept, one in which non-humans do not and cannot participate. Although, Scholz (2013) does suggest that people may provide political solidarity on behalf of non-humans, or that social solidarity might be a more inclusive concept. Given the immaturity of infant and toddler cognitive skills, Scholz's argument might also indicate that political solidarity would be difficult to achieve with infants. Interestingly, Scholz (2013) conveys that political solidarity does not always entail a democratic outcome. In other words, a leader can make a decision which is in both parties' interests (such as avoiding a life or death danger) even if the weaker party does not agree. Scholz's understanding is contrary to that of Plumwood (2002) who states that:

> […] an appropriate ethic of environmental activism is not that of identity or unity (or its reversal, indifference) but that of solidarity—standing with the other in a supportive relationship in the political sense (Plumwood, 2002, p. 202).

The key issue here is whether non-humans (or children) are capable of identifying and sharing common political interests with other people, and thus able to stand together not just socially, but politically. Scholz's argument attests that to be truly 'human' and capable of politics requires the ability to reason. Plumwood (1991) counters that reasoning, when used to identity self from other, or human from nature, reveals threads of dualistic patriarchy. Reasoning is taken to be masculine and a purely human quality in opposition to qualities such as emotion, which are taken to be feminine and 'natural' and of little value for understanding the world. I argue, like Plumwood, that political solidarity – to stand with another to achieve shared intentions – does not necessitate 'human-style' reasoning (though neither does it exclude it), but rather it requires communication, participation, and common intent (Hawkins, 2009; Plumwood, 1991; 1998).

Indeed, many of the basic elements of survival such as nourishment or protection could be taken as common political intentions that do not necessitate shared reasoning. For example, both people and our gut microbiota share the intention of gaining nourishment from the relationship, and each is actively working to maintain this goal politically (responding to threats, reinforcing barriers, exchanging nourishment and communicative particles, and so on). Yet, I do not sit down with my gut bacteria and have reasoned and decisive conversation about how we intend to overcome the threat of antibiotics to our mutual interests. The players who strive to obtain such political goals do not need to perceive them in the same way as each other in order to meet them together. Even among reasoning humans, such as a group

of people banded together to end toxic dumping, each member of the group is going to have a different motivation, perspective, and experience with toxic dumping, and potentially different ideas about how to achieve their goal, but this does not automatically negate their common intention to work together to end it.

One of the assumptions of dualistic logic is that non-human or oppressed others do not possess their own internal ethical standards, decision making capabilities, or subjectivity, and therefore their perspective is either non-existent or of little value to human ends. Plumwood (2002) calls for a more open ethic to account for the differences of perception among non-human kin, while still retaining common interests. It would seem that we do not need to know how others process social and material contexts to be able to form some sort of understanding of their intentions within them.

For example, when Evelyn was a newborn she could not provide a rational or logical argument to explain how she determined that she wanted to be held. Whether or not she used reasoning or instinct or any other form of understanding to come to her decision was irrelevant. From her perspective she needed to be held, and as a responsive parent I validated her perspective and held her, even if from my position I could not reason why. The key to our solidarity was open communication in concert with layers of mutual intent – she cried to be held and deep in my being, driven by my love and attachment to her, I understood what I needed to do to maintain both of our interests, so I held her. As Plumwood (1991) attests, this constitutes respect. In contrast, in sleep training for example, infant needs are purely reasoned by others. If the adult does not perceive that the infant has any valid reason for crying, then that cry is deemed to be of little importance to either party and is ignored, thus

undermining the infant's subjectivity and the parent's connection to it (Owens et al, 1999).

If solidarity can be achieved among individuals with different realities, then I would also propose that the leadership provided by the 'stronger' participants would strengthen the benefit and effectiveness of that solidarity. In this case, while leadership represents a type of 'hierarchy of power', it does not imply instrumentalism (as in other dualistic examples of hierarchies of power). For example, in the case of activism, Plumwood (2002) states that people may provide leadership on behalf of wombats to meet a common interest – to save wombat lives, albeit with different motivations and perspectives from both wombats and people.

> We may identify in solidarity with an animal, say a wombat, expressing our solidarity by being willing to undertake political action on their behalf (working to remove them from vermin status, for example)[…] (Plumwood, 2002, p. 200).

Likewise, parent and child are different selves with different perspectives, yet can share common intentions, and thus as a more experienced and 'stronger' individuals, parents can provide a powerful leadership role to help achieve those common interests without such a hierarchy of power implying dualism. As Scholz (2008) has described, solidarity does not need to be a democratic process, or even one of equal suffering or experience. Navigating the power relations of self and other is a very delicate and contextual relational art that is not always logical or fits into previous assumptions of what constitutes ideal relationality.

So, how does solidarity relate to determining when control is not dualistic? As we have seen here, a hierarchy of power that may be understood as a classic feature of dualism, does not necessarily entail dualism, as in the case of leadership. A parent

can provide benevolent and empathetic leadership on behalf of their child, even if it conflicts with the child's interests. If control of the other is ultimately preserving significant common values on which the relationship depends, such as valuing one's existence, then control in this instance is not dualistic, but supportive of the relationship as a whole. Preventing Evelyn from running into the road, even if it conflicts with her interests, is an example of parental control (and at times force) that preserves her life, and therefore the connectivity of our relationship as a whole.

Additionally, self-interested boundaries and barriers between individuals do not imply dualistic style hyperseperation, instrumentalism, or denial of the other's connection. In parenting relationships, mutual benefits may derive from both biological sources (passing on genetic legacies and the provision of nourishment) and from social sources as well, such as love, protection, attachment, friendship, and companionship. These mutual benefits are likely maintained with complex barriers to prevent self-interested exploitation. Some of these barriers may be subtle and socially constructed. When Evelyn told me '"No!" in response to my request to get dressed, she was asserting a defensive social barrier to protect her interests from aggressive and unreasonable (as she did not view getting dressed as reasonable) exploit by myself. Indeed, social barriers which retain mutual interests in parenting (or any other socially beneficial relationship) may be easily undermined by oppressive social values. For example, 'talking-back' may be viewed as unacceptable behaviour (as challenging authority) and reprimanded or discouraged in some way, thus undermining some of the child's self-protective barriers. As discussed earlier, relationships need not, and should not, exclude the individuality of the self or the existence of relational, responsive, and empathetic boundaries between self and other.

To communicate a social expectation, while respecting her barrier “No!”, allows her the space to create her own reasoning for getting dressed, such as to fit-in with our group. This approach did not always result in getting dressed on any given day, because every encounter is unique in its own right and our cooperation waivers day to day with all the highs and lows of life and parenting.

It is equally difficult to break free of focusing my parenting tactics in terms of successes and ends, such as achieving a fully clothed child, rather than as moments within long-term relational processes. Sometimes, when mutual connection was lacking and we were under pressure, I would exploit our relationship with chocolate bribery to just ‘get the job done’. Indeed, the productive and busy nature of modernity certainly puts additional pressure on parents and children to ‘get on with it’ and ‘hurry up’. This leaves less time to negotiate power relationships in mutual ways, and increases the incidence of perceiving encounters of self and others as oppositional. When you need to get to work and your child will not get dressed, stress and pressure are going to challenge your connection with your child, as well as your ability to establish common goals or navigate division.

While not easy, I have come to understand that I need to approach our encounters by considering Evelyn as a unique self. Furthermore, I need to be aware of my preconceptions of her (e.g. do I assume she is going to be uncooperative?). I need to listen to, understand and respect her barriers, even if I may need to overrule them to keep her safe. It may not be practically effective, efficient, perfect or easy (in terms of modern expectations of achieving parental ends), but more so, this analysis is the start of a process of shedding a lifetime of assumptions about the meaning and treatment of self and other.

In the examples of self from deep ecology as discussed earlier, the reaction to identifying problematic culture or relational dynamics seemed to champion the opposite concept without regard for deeper relational complexities. Indeed, I can see in my own experience of negotiating power with Evelyn that I tended to gravitate towards simplistic and targeted opposites, from rational ("Get dressed so we can shop") to emotional ("Wee! Pants are fun!"), from force ("Alright, I'm putting these pants on") to bribery ("Trade you chocolate for getting dressed?"). All of these approaches carry hidden threads of dualistic logic. It was only when I moved beyond viewing myself in opposition to Evelyn's self, that a bigger picture of self and other emerged. I was anxious and uncomfortable about Evelyn's resistance to getting dressed and uneasy about using aggressive approaches, yet because I was interested in relational development, that self-anxiety guided the adaptation of my approach toward connection, understanding, and cooperation – not toward mastery and oppression.

Plumwood (1991) defines respect as a process of valuing the other in their own right, separate to their instrumental value. I can assume that Evelyn value's her own life and existence, as do I value her life and my relationship with her, and so to forcibly protect her from cars can be done with solidarity. A parent can make a leadership decision, which may conflict with the reality of the child, without disconnecting. I can restrain Evelyn against her will around cars while still supporting/understanding and validating her feelings of frustration, we can still communicate to each other and retain our connection through conflict. Indeed, the 'problem' with the situation is not Evelyn, but the dangerous cars. It's all about approach, subtle communications and actions which instil leadership without disconnection. Indeed, I could have approached restraining Evelyn oppressively by treating her as a 'problem', by

reacting with anger or annoyance at her ‘disobedience’, picking her up and ignoring or denying her frustration and so become emotionally disconnected from her experience. These care-giving choices do not happen in isolation, and are reflective of greater ontological attitudes and relational patterns and connections.

6.7 Conclusion

After completing my analysis of dualistic logic in sleep training (presented in the preceding chapter), I began to fear that parental control in any form may likewise be symptomatic of the dualistic logic that informs much contemporary parenting. Through this subsequent chapter’s analysis of caregiver power, however, understood in terms of self and other, and incorporating concepts of solidarity and leadership, I have come to the conclusion that control in parenting, in and of itself, does not imply dualism. Dualistic control is bedded in oppositional and instrumental uses of power, void of attachment and any desire to understand the particular individuality of the other (unless it enhances instrumentalism for personal ends). Dualism is ultimately detrimental to many of the possible benefits arising from a relationship, and reflective of intentions to dominate for personal gain rather than to lead in solidarity (Plumwood, 1991; 1998; 2002).

The individualised qualities of myself and my child (manifest, for example, in different priorities about getting dressed) and the barriers which prevent the collapse of our mutual connection/existence (such as when I restrained Evelyn around cars) are not symptomatic of dualism, but are instead significant (albeit challenging) features of care among diverse kin. Indeed, control, as benevolent leadership, when

utilised sensitively in context, and with empathy, intimacy and understanding, can be beneficial to both parties, and reinforce the resilience and strength of the greater relationship.

In the situation of getting dressed, my tactics of force and manipulation were akin to the instrumentalism of dualistic logic because they lacked an understanding of Evelyn's 'self'. They allowed a one-sided focus for me on my own imperatives, and ignored the greater relational dynamic underlying getting dressed, such as fitting in socially and culturally. The act of getting dressed, as a social expectation, required us to take the time to process and understand it as such and to develop a supportive relationship based on leadership which then enabled us to move forward with greater solidarity. This process was not (and is not) easy, quick, or clear-cut. I am still working through similar relational encounters, shedding my own engrained assumptions and training, and all while Evelyn develops, communicates and acts upon her own understandings of me (and everyone else) in new and amazing ways.

It's only now that I realise how confused and unsure my leadership skills have been, due to fears of damaging our relationship with dualistic-style control. I worried that all control was destructive, which left me feeling guilt-ridden and deflated whenever I'd had to assert my position. This process has opened my eyes to how important unwavering leadership truly is for maintaining connectivity among those who share investment in an intimate relationship, yet still need to negotiate divisions in power and perspective. In practice, however, the line between dualistic instrumentalism and leadership is very easy to blur, especially in the middle of challenging parenting moments.

Chapter 7 Judgement

When we only look at behavior, we stop seeing the child and only look with an intent to judge whether we need to reward or punish. When we look behind behaviour, we see that little struggling human, our little human, who needs our help with something.

(Eanes, 2016, no page number)

7.1 Introduction

In the previous two chapters, I developed an understanding of how dualistic logic may manifest in parenting relationships, and then unpacked the fine line between oppressive control and leadership when one cares for a 'weaker' other. These thoughts, values, and actions which guide our relational lives do not just suddenly pop into existence, but have an intricate ontological and epistemological background that I will explore in this chapter.

On the very surface, such ontological and epistemological qualities are apparent in how people interpret or judge themselves and others. Judgement is an action, but the form it takes is founded in moral or ethical frameworks. As Chappell (2014) describes, ethics (or moral philosophy as he calls it) is the practice of applying reason to the question: How should life be lived? Judgement is a form of reasoning. It is a means of questioning, testing, and refining different actions and patterns of relating

within the scope of one's own reality (Chappell, 2014). In this chapter, I identify two distinct forms of value-based reasoning. I call one open-ended ethic, and the other closed-ended morality. Understanding judgement and its underpinning ethical/moral frameworks is necessary for understanding how we shape our perceptions of others, how we reason our actions towards others, and in what ways judgement may support the connectivity of relationships or, alternatively, facilitate the domination of others.

7.2 The Roles of Judgement

Judgement usually entails forms of praising and shaming of either the material/entity/person (self or other) or their actions. Judgement is contrary to empathy (understood as the ability relate to the positions/conditions of others), in that, the judge presents a one-sided view of the event in relation to *their own* interests and moral standards. For example the judgement 'you're a bad-girl' raises the question: bad for whom? What makes someone bad? To call a child a 'bad-girl' means that the child is violating the adult's moral ideals and behavioural expectations, and is therefore lacking in virtue. Judgement, in and of itself, is not necessarily symptomatic of dualistic logic, but rather, it depends on the intent with which it is used and the subtleties of its use. As Mathews (2003) describes, judgement is a survival tactic which helps us to identify threats and maintain social order:

> In light of such an awakening to my own vulnerability, I begin to pass judgement on what is before me […] To exercise judgement is to affirm those aspects of reality that are compatible with my vital interests and to set the rest "beyond the pale" (Mathews, 2003, p.95).

The phenomenon of shame (and similarly guilt) is an interesting result of judgement which could serve to either strengthen relationships or to degrade them. Yang (Yang and Rosenblatt, 2001) describes the sensation of shame:

> When one feels chang-pee [shame] one would like to hide in a little mouse hole, to run away, or to die. In chang-pee one feels heat, a fever in one's cheeks. Often chang-pee is a sudden, brief feeling. It is typically felt in public. There is also a long-term chang-pee. Feeling long-term chang-pee, one would try to avoid others who know and are reminders of one's shame (Yang and Rosenblatt, 2001, p. 363).

As I described in my previous analysis, particular empathetic boundaries among kin are critical to prevent the exploitation (intentional or not) of each other's vulnerabilities. Shame is one potential social boundary which may have biologically and culturally co-evolved to maintain intimate social relationships. Shame occurs when one appraises themselves from the viewpoint of another, either directly receiving judgement or imagining that judgement (Scheff, 2003). We value the opinion of others when they are integral to ourselves. Likewise, what others think of us (or how we imagine what others think) can influence what we think about ourselves and our own identity. As Mathews (2003) describes, judgement (to judge and be judged) heralds the development of self-consciousness and an awareness of the vulnerability of the individual self to the power of others:

> This shift is perceived, in the frame of the story as a fall, because awakening to one's individuality or separate existence instantly entails awakening to one's vulnerability, a vulnerability that remained unrecognised as long as one continued to experience oneself as immersed in a primordial (imperishable) unity. To become individuated then is to fall from the omnipotent "participation mystique" of primal

> un(self)consciousness into the anxiety and fragility of individual self-consciousness (Mathews, 2003, p. 94).

Shame can be divided into several different affect types depending upon context and culture, but the most common types include embarrassment or everyday shame, guilt, and character shame (usually as judgement imposed by others) (Scheff, 2003; Yang and Rosenblatt, 2001). Guilt is described by Bedford and Hwang (2003) as an internal feeling of violating one's own standards, or of feeling inadequate in a way which is assumed to negatively affect others. Guilt entails a feeling of responsibility and empathy for others without harming self-image. Guilt is associated with adaptive social responses such as exploration and reflection to make amends. In contrast, character shaming imposed by an external other is associated with maladaptive and defensive behaviours such as depression, anger, evading responsibility, and poor self-image (Bedford and Hwang, 2003; Czub, 2003; Luby et al, 2009).

As I have experienced, parenting can be riddled with moments of guilt. Here is an example of one such occasion when I felt that I had failed as a parent:

(This story is composed from journal notes in March 2015, Evelyn's age: 22 months)

The day we moved into our caravan on our new block of land, I was feeling completely overwhelmed with responsibility and demands. I was trying to move furniture and unpack boxes, and the weather was wild and windy and shaking the caravan and my wits. Evelyn was constantly demanding that I to do this and that for her, and I got so overwhelmed that I exploded in an angry rage and told her to leave me alone. She looked a little confused at first, then sad and hurt. I fell into a lump on the couch and cried amongst our messy piles of stuff. I felt so much guilt and anguish for getting angry at her, this innocent little human who loves me. The thought of

hurting her or making her feel bad about herself was unbearable. She was just being a two year old. She can't get her own food, and two year olds just speak what's on their minds. I told her I was really sorry for getting angry, and we took a break from trying to be productive to recoup.

Such guilt motivated me to do better in the future, such as by evaluating my coping strategies with stress, and recognising situations that create such rage and changing them. Depending on what individuals do with guilt, particularly if a reflexive process is applied, guilt may signal and motivate change in more relationally connective and dialogical ways (Bedford and Hwang, 2003; Czub, 2003). Indeed, guilt does not just implore parents to relate more mindfully to the ones they care for, but reveals that self-consciousness is an essential part of even a young toddler's social life, and that guilt is a shared experience. For example:

(This story is composed from journal notes May 2015, Evelyn's age: 24 months)

One morning Evelyn was playing with a wooden stacker toy and decided to start flinging the base (a wooden square with a dowel pointing out) around in the air. I was sitting next to her and got clocked in the face with one of the pointy corners. It was very painful, and I screamed 'Ouch!' and grabbed my face. She looked startled by my reaction and then her head sunk, and she buried her face in my shoulder. She displayed guilt. I consoled her guilty conscience and let her know I was ok and there were no hard feelings.

Evelyn felt guilty because she judged herself against her own internal ethical standards, felt responsible, and displayed remorse at their violation. I could see how she felt from her facial and body expression, and my trust in her was restored. I knew she understood the ramifications of her actions, and that she did not intend to hurt

me. What would have been the result if I had yelled ‘bad-girl’, and shamed her character? The identity of her character would be in question and such an attack may have activated her ‘fight or flight’ response, such as to avoid me (a reminder of shame) or to be self-defensive and angry (Czub, 2013; Scheff, 2003; Yang and Rosenblatt, 2001). Rather than feeling and accepting internal guilt which facilitated her making amends with me, imposed character shaming may have overshadowed that guilt and resulted in disconnection and maladaptive behaviours.

Jaffe et al (2015) indicates that cultures with low levels of guilt tend to show greater social dysfunction, and that the phenomena of guilt is both universal but also variable (identifying its cultural and biological origins). Judging one’s self and actions against an internal ethical standard (and feeling responsibility for it) is a much different proposition to being judged by others as a person or an action. Indeed, judging and being judged by others is much more likely to stray into the realm of relational dysfunctionality as it imposes the moral imperative of one reality over another (without empathetic understanding of the other), resulting in reactions such as anger, self-defence, psychopathy (such as depression), the institution of authoritarian social hierarchies, and potential dejection or rejection from the group depending on the degree and frequency of the judgement (Bedford and Hwang, 2003; Luby et al, 2009; Scheff, 2003). This kind of judgement can go beyond indicating certain universal ethical or moral standards and stray into destructive oppression.

Yet, if others did not voice their interpretations of reality or how our actions affected them, it would be much harder to build an understanding of their position. As Plumwood (1991) suggests, voicing ones position while valuing the other in their own right, without judgement based on our own reality, is the critical difference

between maladaptive judgement and communication which helps to build an understanding of others (Czub, 2013; Plumwood, 1991). Judgement's role in shaping the beneficial and/or degrading qualities of relationships likely represents a very delicate balance of responses and responsibility tempered by the complexity of communication and context.

7.3 Closed-Ended Morality

In this analysis, closed-ended morality refers to the use of de-contextualised, black-and-white moral codes or rules to apply judgement to a circumstance and/or a person's character or identity. This kind of morality is guided by a rigid set of specific relational rules based on facts and truths, usually determined by a governing body (such as a parent, religion or culture) to maintain order. The judgement always comes down to good or bad, black or white, yes or no (it either conforms to or violates a rigid moral code), and hence is closed-ended and reminiscent of dualistic logic.

7.3.1 Punishment

Punishment (or the threat of punishment) is a key means of forcing others to uphold moral codes and retain social order by imposing conformity (Bedford and Hwang, 2003). Punishment involves inflicting pain on another as retribution for 'immoral' actions and/or as a means of discouraging that behaviour in the future through associating that behaviour with pain (Bedford and Hwang, 2003; Straus, 2010; Straus

and Paschall, 2009). Punishments can involve one or a combination of many different painful instruments that are variously emotional (such as criticising character or withholding love), physical (such as spanking), financial (such as withholding earnings or taking away possessions), and/or social (such as exile or isolation). Dualistic logic assumes that subordinate others do not possess their own internal ethical standards, and therefore universal moral codes are taken to be unquestionably right and true and enforcing them a righteous act (Plumwood, 1993). Such thinking rationalises maintaining moral standards (and therefore social order) effectively and efficiently at any cost (Mathews, 2003). Paradoxically, while punishment produces immediate results, those results do not confer lasting or long-term prosocial behaviours. Indeed, Slade and Wissow (2004) found that the more frequently a child was spanked in the first two years of life, the more likely they were to have anti-social behavioural problems upon entering school a few years later. Indeed, punishment (particularly corporeal punishment) often has long-term anti-social outcomes (which are variable depending on the individual and severity of punishment) (Bugental et al 2003; Kim and Kochanska, 2015; Straus and Paschall, 2009).

While punishment is sometimes framed as providing ‘consequences for actions’, this assertion denies that actions have their own consequences. If a child touches a hot stove they get burnt, the painful burn is the consequence of the action. If a parent then sends the child to a time-out chair as punishment for defying their instruction not to touch the stove, then this encounter is no longer just about why one should not touch the stove, but also about reinforcing authority, order and a hierarchy of power. Resentment, anger, shame, defeat and disconnection begin to brew. Punishment is personal - it sends and reinforces a message of separation and control – the power of

one self over the other. Such a show of power also displays the vulnerabilities of the child (physical and emotional), which are instrumentally utilised to enforce obedience.

7.3.2 The Dualisms of Closed-Ended Morality

Good and bad, right and wrong, like human and nature, are disconnected concepts, void of the complex and contextual grey area which acknowledges their connection and meaning. As previously introduced, the closed-ended praising judgement 'good-girl' hides relational meanings, such as: good for whom? In oppressive situations, 'good' and 'bad' are terms of perspective, division, and definition originating from an oppositional perspective. Such terms deny an understanding of others and fail to acknowledge that others may uphold a different ethic. They reflect a patriarchy which rejects the notion that (repressed) others also have perspective, subjectivity, and autonomy (or that these are of any value) whether they belong to nature, woman, slave, or child (Mathews, 2003; Plumwood, 1991). In the following story I recount my own initial awakening to the oppressive qualities of 'good' and 'bad' judgements in parenting.

(From memories June 2013, preceding my parenting journal, Evelyn's age: newborn)

When Evelyn was just a newborn, I spent a lot of time looking on the internet while she slept on my lap. I came across an interesting parenting trend concerning judgement. It entailed the avoidance of applying personal or judgemental labels to children, particularly those used to praise and shame children such as 'good-girl'

and 'bad-girl'. Instead the focus of the parental response was on the task or action, not the child/person. The judgemental sayings are replaced with responses such as "Wow!", "Show me more", "How do you think she felt?" and so on. These new responses are intended to be responsive without identity labels (such as good or clever), and/or encourage children to reflect on what happened and why. These rationales were fuelled by research such as the work done by Carol Dweck (1986; 2017) on fixed and growth mindsets. She found that children who are praised frequently with phrases such as 'you're so clever' avoided situations which challenged their 'clever' identity, and as a result self-limited opportunities for growth and interaction. This parenting trend was also motivated to avoid the negative outcomes of character shame, such as poor self-image and the manifest-destiny of that poor image.

Suffice to say that I was convinced by the rationale of these arguments, and implemented their strategies as best I could. I came across this trend when Evelyn was still only a newborn, before I had gotten in the habit of constantly saying 'good-girl' to her. Michael was on-board with this suggestion and implemented it well. Of course, there were still many people around us using good and bad rhetoric with and around Evelyn. "Good-girl' in particular seemed to be an ingrained and automatic response to a range of behaviours for many people (as it was for me before I was made aware of it). As such, I didn't feel comfortable telling well-meaning others to stop calling Evelyn a 'good-girl' or 'clever', although I came close on one occasion involving shaming.

(This story is composed from journal notes from November, 2014, Evelyn's age: 17 months old)

It was a sunny Saturday afternoon, and we were visiting a friend's house. There were a dozen or so other people there, milling about, and making friendly chit-chat over food. Evelyn was entering the post-lunch crazy-time, and was in, around, and all over the place. She spotted a mound of colourful toys in one corner, and dragged Michael over to check them out. She sorted through some blocks, then, with a twinkle in her eye, suddenly picked one up, and playfully chucked it at Michael's head, giggling. Michael, dodged the toy, and looking a little embarrassed said, "hey, don't throw that at my head", and then redirected Evelyn to a new activity. Suddenly a lady, whom I didn't know particularly well, turns to Evelyn, and with an exaggerated scowl on her face, says: "No throwing, you are very naughty". I looked back at her in shock trying to control my rage (who is she to be scolding someone else's kid?!). I was unable to come up with a response which articulated my aggravation, so I just turned away and moved on.

Good and bad, and naughty and nice, are general, black-and-white terms that reflect assumed innate personal qualities from within the confines of a single 'true' reality. They don't clearly articulate emotional meaning, cause and effect, motivations, or problem solving in relational encounters. When the lady shamed Evelyn for throwing a toy, the meaning she was likely trying to communicate was 'your actions could injure someone', 'this concerns me', 'I'm trying to help you learn', and 'injuring someone is not in line with my moral code'. Instead, Evelyn may have heard 'you are a bad person for throwing, and I don't like you'. I felt angry at her comment, because I did not want Evelyn to feel that she was an innately 'bad' person by behaving like the toddler she was. Such polar judgements lack an understanding of the context and circumstance of the event. I would agree that intentionally injuring someone is undesirable, but I would not have considered this the case, nor inflicting

shame the best relational approach. Toddlers have not fully developed executive function or impulse control, and it is certainly not uncommon for one to do something impulsive – taking risks is essential for learning about the active nuances of relationships. Lobbing a toy at someone and laughing does not seem to be the act of an inherently malicious person, but of a toddler who wants to play, connect, and explore.

Indeed, if Evelyn were an adult, would the woman have voiced her judgement so freely and self-righteously? Suissa (2013) argues that 'good and bad' judgements (using praise as an example) are both instrumental and reductionist, and highlights the point that adults and children may receive different moral treatments.

> […] the situation raises interesting questions about why we praise each other, and about the sense in which praise, as a social practice, is embedded within a complex moral context. Trying to answer these questions leads into further philosophical discussion about our moral attitudes towards adults and children, and the differences between them (Suissa, 2013, p. 6).

Closed-ended morality also reveals a conceptual dualism in the divorce of emotion (feminine and child-like) from reason (masculine and parent-like). Plumwood (1991) highlights that emotion is integral to reasoned morality, as care and empathy are born from care-giving experiences and provide a depth of understanding that is not possible with abstract concepts of morality, such as those found in reasoned moral codes.

> With nature, as with the human sphere, the capacity to care, to experience sympathy, understanding, and sensitivity to the situation and fate of particular others, and to take responsibility for others is an index of our moral being. Special relationship with, care

> for, or empathy with particular aspects of nature as experiences rather than with nature as abstraction are essential to provide a depth and type of concern that is not otherwise possible. Care and responsibility for particular animals, trees, and rivers that are known well, loved, and appropriately connected to the self are an important basis for acquiring a wider, more generalized concern (Plumwood, 1991, p. 7).

Thus, the use of a rational moral code to praise and shame children is divorced from any effort to understand the developmental and circumstantial context in which the child acted. Such understanding would require openness and empathy on the part of the adult, as described by Plumwood (1991). Passing judgement on others (whether praise or shame) is yet another glimmer of dualistic logic. Emotion is linked to children who exemplify emotional impulse, and reason is linked to the parent who conceptualises moral codes of 'good' and 'bad' to meet predefined behavioural ends. As Plumwood (1991, 1993) describes, such polar reasoning justifies the oppression and judgement of emotions and beings that are conceptualised as emotional by the dominator.

This raises the question, how did such black-and-white moral thinking (and practices) become so enduring?

7.3.3 Original Sin and Dualism

In western culture, close-ended morality surfaces in the themes of judgement originating from the Christian story of creation (Boyce, 2014; Mathews, 2003). As the story goes, Adam and Eve were the first man and woman. They were created by God in his own image, to live eternal lives in the Garden of Eden. They were warned

by God not to eat fruit from the Tree of Life, for eating from this tree will give them Divine knowledge of good and evil. A serpent convinced Eve to eat from the tree, and she then shared the fruit with Adam. They gained knowledge of good and evil, and were judged by God for their disobedience. They felt shame as both an internal guilt and external disgrace. God exiled them from paradise to suffer on earth. They then populated the earth, and their descendants were born with (and born from) this original sin (Boyce, 2014; Mathews, 2003). Boyce (2014) argues that the concept of original sin has played a significant role in shaping modern western values, practices, identities, and relationships:

> The creation story was the spiritual foundation on which the western world was made, directing how people understood the divine, each other, the natural world and, above all, themselves. […] Today the influence of original sin is most obvious in the distinctive discontent of modern people – the feelings of guilt and inadequacy associated not with doing wrong but with being wrong (Boyce, 2014, pp. 9-10).

This view also crops up in the historical motivations for sleep training infants. Discipline, such as sleep training, served to repent original sin, and thus instil virtue in children as early as possible.

> The best hope for children was rigorous training, and the Puritans discovered that their infants could be taught to repent from a remarkably young age (Boyce, 2014, P. 78).

This was particularly important when childhood mortality was high (Boyce, 2014). It was imperative then, that parents pre-judged the ‘goodness’ and ‘badness’ of their children so as to mould the shape of their moral character in line with religious doctrine – in no uncertain terms as efficiently and effectively as possible. Given the anxiety one would have felt about being judged by God (and the social obedience

and stability this would have provided), it certainly isn't surprising that the relational frameworks and values promoted by the story of Adam and Eve have permeated the lives of these people and those who have descended from Christian cultures.

Christian moral law is certainly not as overtly prominent in secular western culture as it once was, but the underlying values and instruments of these laws still linger (such as not causing physical harm to others, and externally shaming, including by means of punishment, those who do). These moral codes provide a rational, tried and tested means of retaining order, predictability and safety in a world of suffering. As Mathews describes:

> […] the world is perceived as a classic vale of tears, and we achieve our humanity by responding to this in a rational manner by instituting a rule of moral law which, though repressive, enables us to deal collectively and in a dignified manner with the dangers that threaten us (Mathews, 2003, p. 101).

Not only does moral order provide people with a framework for social survival, it also defines their identity within a secure hierarchy of power. God dominates and then separates himself from Adam and Eve, and so Adam and Eve, created in God's image, are also entitled to dominate, shame, and punish their sinful subordinates (such as 'nature', animals, indigenous people, women, and children) to maintain moral order and self-preservation (Mathews, 2003). This hierarchy is the foundation of dualistic logic, and it allows a single perspective or moral imperative to rule all.

As Plumwood (1993) describes, dualistic logic allows for the domination of others to preserve one's own position of power - just as God maintained his power by exiling Adam and Eve after they gained divine knowledge of good and evil from the Tree of Life (Mathews, 2003). Plumwood (1993) theorised that dualistic practice is typified

by denial (God overlooks that Adam and Eve were made in his own image and thus denies that their decision to defy him must also reflect his image and their connection to him), hyperseparation (Adam and Eve are exiled from Eden), relational definition (God's will is taken as primary, Adam and Eve's actions against his will are seen as 'sin'), instrumentalism (Adam and Eve are subjects of God's laws, punishment and shame are God's instrument for enforcing those laws), and homogenisation (Adam and Eve are seen as universally sinful, and so their descendants also carry their universal sin).

If dualistic logic and closed-ended morality have been a key mode of ensuring our survival and progress, how do we safely move beyond it? As Mathews (2003) suggests, venturing beyond the moral codes, judgement, and rationalism that provides order and relative safety for many requires reassurance that the vulnerability of new relational frontiers will not cause harm, but a new mode of thriving. Parenting is one such way to gently move forward by valuing children in their own right, as individual subjective beings, not good or bad characters or subjects of rigid moral codes to manipulate with judgements and imposed shame. A reflexive parenting evolution could offer a direct and long-term means of moving towards a dialogical ethic while retaining a safe social order (e.g. without sudden violent social uprisings). By acknowledging the perspectives of others and reflecting upon the contextual and subjective complexity of daily encounters, parents may demonstrate to their children that the vulnerability experienced while encountering others with openness, while risky, can also offer the opportunity of gaining profound intersubjective understanding and personal growth that may reap many relational benefits. Indeed, parenting provides a rich opportunity to foster a social system of open-ended ethics – for both children and parents.

7.4 Open-Ended Ethics

7.4.1 A Narrative about Empathetic Limits

As previously discussed, 'discipline' is often an area of parenting practice which can sometimes easily become dominating and judgemental. Before having my own child, I believed that discipline was about forcing conformity (through judgement, punishment, and shame), as an essential part of developing a child's character (obedience) and a source of a parent's pride or shame (do others think my child is a brat or well behaved?). After having Evelyn I began to question these assumptions. I wondered how one could 'disciplined' respectfully. Laura Markham's (Markham, 2013) process for setting empathetic limits is one possible means of applying and modelling an open-ended ethic (or an approach to relational engagement based in subjective, reflexive, and contextual understandings of others) in a care-giving/leadership role. Below, I describe how I began to evolve my own application of open-ended ethics in encounters with Evelyn.

(Memories from May 2013, preceding my parenting journal, Evelyn's age: newborn)

When Evelyn was barely a week old, the child health nurse visited our house to do a health check. During the visit, she asked me if I had thought about what sort of parenting style I would use. At this stage I had no idea there were different styles, but I remember saying that we thought it was important that she be disciplined – not in the sense of being punished, but more so in setting rigid limits and high expectations and strictly enforcing them. At that stage, I assumed that discipline was an important part of parenting her character, and I did not want her to become a

'spoiled' or disrespectful youth. The attitude of the culture around me instilled the belief that 'kids these days' are disrespectful and spoiled due to permissive parenting. Such reasoning sounded logical enough and I accepted it without question.

Discipline was not much of a concern in the first year of Evelyn's life. She would feed, sleep, play and ride around in my carrier. It was during this time that I became exposed to a vast resource of different parenting approaches. In passively encountering articles and conversations around the topic, my views about the role of limits and discipline in shaping character were greatly shifted. I began to view traditional discipline (as in rigid limits enforced with punishment) as more aligned with the approaches of baby trainers, to condition and control behaviour in line with adult ideals. This was in contrast to gentle parenting approaches which considered childhood behaviour and our response to it within developmental and empathetic contexts. As her mobility and skills increased, and she began to find herself in sticky situations, setting limits suddenly became something we would need to face.

I was a big fan of Dr. Laura Markham's blog AhaParenting.com (Markham, 2013). Her parenting advice was aimed at creating empathetic and reciprocal parent-child relationships. She based her approach, termed 'empathetic limits', on the authoritative (not authoritarian) style of parenting described by developmental psychologist Baumrind (Baumrind, 1966). Dr. Markham argues that while popular opinion views parenting in black-and-white terms – giving-in as opposed to controlling – that there is a third way, a more respectful way of responding to children as whole people and helping them to meet developmentally appropriate expectations. This approach resonated with my relational views, so I read her

instructional advice about setting empathetic limits, and prepared myself for practising it when the time came.

To practice setting empathetic limits she describes starting from a position of understanding and reflecting the child's point of view. Limits need to be reasoned (and sharing that reasoning with the child), and the parent provides acceptance and support for the grieving of that limit and for moving on. The aim is to maintain the limit without severing connections. This practice stems from the belief that parents and children are on the same team and help each other maintain boundaries, rather than assume that boundaries are oppositional power struggles.

While setting limits does entail control, the difference is that the emphasis is not on controlling the character or core of the child (as in punitive approaches), but to create a barrier to actions which may result in some form of reasoned harm and to redirect those actions to more acceptable avenues. She further stipulates that empathetic limit setting is not about the quantity of limits, but about carefully selecting a meaningful reasoning for setting a limit (e.g. for the psychological and physical safety of self and others) and empathetically but firmly maintaining limits in concert with context, development and understanding. In this way, the child's autonomy is retained and their emotional response is validated and processed, while actions are shaped within the cultural bounds of acceptability and safety. The parent is not just 'setting limits', they are providing leadership to help children 'fit-in' to social landscapes without judging (either positively or negatively) the character of the child.

(This story is composed from journal entries in June 2014, Evelyn's age: 14 months old)

As Evelyn transitioned from baby to toddler, I encountered more situations where I needed to intervene in her actions. Setting empathetic limits can be challenging as it requires an understanding of the context, emotions, and motivations of the players, which is not always obvious. Additionally, as she became older and more assertive she displayed stronger reactions to my limits. One such common limit-inducing encounter occurred around drawing on the floor and walls with crayons. She would be happily sketching on her paper, then gradually make her way onto the floor with the crayons.

Figure 5 - Evelyn, about 15 months, wildly stabbing some paper with a marker. Photo credit: Kaseen Cook

I would initially respond, "I know you love sketching. Please sketch on the paper, not the floor. Sketching on the floor damages it."

Sometimes she would be happy to go back to drawing on the paper, but at other times the impulse to draw on the floor was too great and she would say, "No!" and continue drawing on the floor.

So I would intervene, "Evelyn, I can see you can't stop yourself, so I'm going to help you by removing the crayons now. We can try colouring again later."

She would start to cry and scream as I removed the crayons from her hand. I would offer my support, although she usually didn't want to be touched or talked to. I questioned if I was empathising correctly. My attempts to verbally empathise seemed to anger her, so I would just sit with her in solidarity. Once things had calmed down I would reintroduce the crayons, and reinforce the expectation that they only be used on the paper. I would still have to reinforce the same limit a few more times in the future, but as time passed she stuck to the limit more and more.

Of course there were times when I felt that I was punishing her by man-handling the crayons off of her when reasoning failed, and I wondered if the 'empathy' part of the limits was actually getting through in my approach, as she appeared to not want my verbal or physical validation. I also wondered if I lacked particular empathising and understanding skills. While empathetic limits are not as instantly effective as punishment or abandoning the cause all together, I have noticed that over time it becomes less and less necessary to escalate limit-setting to the intervention stage, and that verbal reasoning is more effective as she understands concepts like 'danger', 'injury' and 'appreciation'.

Further, I wonder if Evelyn's urge to draw on the floor was driven by an urge to connect with the world around her. If children didn't experiment in this impulsive way, through physical experience, it would be difficult for them to gain a complex (and functional) understanding of their relational world and their role in it. How we respond to this testing behaviour (with judgement or guidance), and how children view themselves as a result, becomes an important relational issue.

To a certain extent, only Evelyn will truly know her motivations to draw on the floor, but as she was otherwise content at the time, it's likely that she was curious about the properties of the floor as a drawing surface or maybe, but less likely, my response. Drawing on the floor created a cascade of connections – to the crayon (how it feels in her hand, how it glides across the surface), to the floor (how the floor changed when attacked by a crayon), to me (how I respond to her actions) and to herself (how she evaluates herself in light of the variety of social and material responses to her actions). These connections did not only take the form of boundaries, but also of responses. Boundaries can be seen as relational end-points – 'stop!', whereas responses are relational openings – 'what have we learned about our connection to the crayon, floor, our parent, and ourselves?'. Perhaps some boundary setting concepts overlook the value those connections in favour of maintaining order and self-control or of just stopping the discomfort of boundaries as soon as possible. These hidden communications (between child, crayon, floor, parent and self) may help children to understand their place in the 'the web', understand (material and living) others, and why one needs to be responsively self-regulating in these encounters – to avoid damaging their relational web.

Upon deeper reflection on this experience, I believe that limit setting empathy may not just come from reflecting upon her emotions and trying to console them, but in *accepting* her emotions. In this case, to empathise is not to try to 'make things better', but to acknowledge that she is *not ok* , to grieve the loss of the crayon with her, and to value her reality and experience of grief and frustration. I realise now that I expected my empathy to make her feel happy (or be less upset) about removing the crayon. I felt confused and worried when my empathy, which was mostly a bombardment of anxious sounding attempts to comfort her, was met with rejection.

My own discomfort with her grief pushed me to want to soothe the sad feelings away, rather than value and acknowledge them in their own right. My worried tones probably projected the feeling that how she felt was not ok and that she was being reluctantly punished, and/or that I was not sure of the limit myself. Rather, the intent was to block the behaviour of drawing on the floor, because it is in our mutual interest not to vandalise our rental home (and be evicted), and as the leader my responsibility to uphold the mutual value of shelter.

I have later refined the nuances of the technique to include being calm, firm, and accepting in my demeanour. In this way I want my tone and body language to project that I am 'helping' her maintain the limit (rather than punishing or shaming her character), that I accept and understand her impulse as well as her reaction to the limit on that impulse, and that I will be nearby to ride the wave of emotion. If my reaction is calm, without the subtle reactive judgement of being anxious/angry/disappointed perhaps she will feel more accepting of herself, a step towards learning how to 'let things be'. Empathetic limiting setting may not be met with warm happy hugs, but I've learned that relational encounters need not always be happy to be valuable.

7.4.2 Plumwood, Mathews, and Rose on Ethic

Children, like adults, make mistakes and achieve things, but these moments and things do not comprehensively define who they are, their core ethic, or relational intentions. I may espouse the values of relational scholarship, but in practice I still live life as many western consumers do. I waste resources, I drive a car, and I

sometimes parent in ways that contradict my own parenting principles. This does not make me 'bad', it makes me situated. It means that I am a person comprised of millions upon millions of different circumstances which have brought me to where I am, and who I am, right now. It means that I am living within the context of Australian life, and that, while I can reflect, critique and venture to experiment with parenting and life styles which align with relational ideals, I am still apart of the bigger picture and greater webs of connection and influence which I cannot control and which evolve slower than the concepts directing them. This is especially true for children, who are not only dealing with the extreme highs and lows of physiological development, but also learning to navigate social and material landscapes. How we respond to (and define) their actions and perceptions is a critical part of helping children to understand who they are and where they fit in to bigger webs of connection. While 'good-girl' and 'bad-girl' and other judgemental responses situate the identity of children in relation to certain rigid moral codes, it is the modelling and practising of an empathetic understanding of both self and others which drives the formation of a relational ethic and individual responsibility (Scheff, 2003). Empathetic understanding comes from reflection on intimate relational experience, and cannot be adequately derived from judgements of good and bad which lack critical relational engagement and understanding – particularly if the origins of such judgements are linked with dualistic ideology.

As previously described, open-ended ethic refers to the use of open-ended questioning, empathy and communication to arrive at contextual and flexible understandings of relational encounters. This ethic is born from subjective internal standards of responsibility (as opposed to externally imposed morals), a concern for

others and respect for their subjectivity. Open-ended ethics are governed by internal guilt and responsibility, rather than external shame and punishment.

Plumwood's relational and open-ended ethic is rooted in respect for the reality of others, which also requires a respect for the difference of others:

> I have suggested that recognition of and respect for the intrinsic value of the other is an essential adjunct to an ethic of care and respect for difference […] it will not be respect just for those aspects of the other in which it resembles us, and hence will entail respect for difference (Plumwood, 1993, p. 160).

This 'dialogical ethic' involves attributing mind-like properties to others so as to view others with the potential for qualities such as agency, autonomy, and creativity (Bannon, 2009; Plumwood, 1993). To understand the value of such properties in others also requires sensitivity to them (entailing experience), of being open to understanding, and to responsively communicate. As such, Plumwood's ethic describes a foundation for relational problem solving which attempts to account for the higher and common values and contexts of individuals, yet does not undermine the differences that make the mutual benefit of relationships possible.

Mathew's (2003) concept of panpsychism resonates with Plumwood's concept of attributing mind-like properties to others. Panpsychism, as defined by Mathews, broadly describes the theory that all matter has psychic properties (Mathews, 2003, p. 27). This theory establishes the connectivity of matter through a collective consciousness, but does not go so far as to suggest a holism which denies individuality, such as in some understandings of deep ecology. A collective consciousness describes a world made from one fabric, but infinitely differentiated into unique forms (Plumwood, 1991; Mathews, 2003). In contrast, holistic theories,

such as the concept of indistinguishability in Deep Ecology, assert that all beings are undifferentiated from the whole (Fox 1984, 1990; Plumwood, 1991). A collective consciousness suggests a higher level and universal form of communication among all matter. This hints at a common ethic based on the value of existence (in whatever form that may take). This idea resonates with her other socio-ecological injunction, to 'let things be' or to step away from viewing matter instrumentally and to acknowledge its existence in whatever form it takes.

Rose (1992) recounts what appears to be an expression of open-ended ethics within the culture of the Yarralin people of the Victoria River Valley:

> 'Good' and 'bad' are all part of life on earth, and what is 'good' in one context may be 'bad' in another. Moral actions are those which sustain balance, immoral ones are those which violently threaten it. […] [Dreaming/creation] Stories are not so much about rules as they are about types of actions and responses; they demarcate relationships through recounting events. It is up to individuals to identify choices and consequences, and relate them to their own living experience (Rose, 1992, p. 103).

In this account of ethic, the individual is driven to pro-social behaviour, or to repair damaged relationships, through internal guilt-like feelings of responsibility which are steeped in context and an understanding of the people and materials involved. 'Good' and 'bad' are not rigid concepts measured from a single ruler, but flexible assessments of circumstance.

Open-ended ethics, in theory, helps to overcome issues of subjectivity in morality. An open-ended position does so by questioning and empathising with individuals, and thus creates a common ethical platform among individuals that is flexible and

contextual, albeit more vague and complex than clearly defined, closed-ended moral rules.

As in panpsychism, a common ethical platform among individuals could be identified as valuing one's existence (Grusin, 2015). Therefore, if all entities value their own existence, as evidenced by their enduring presence, then an internal ethic which respects and acknowledges the existence of others in their own right may represent a foundation for a common ethical position (Grusin, 2015; Mathews, 2003). While not as easy to understand or implement as pre-defined rules of 'right' and 'wrong', such respect for the perspective or existence of others allows for relational problem-solving without needing to dominate the other. Such an open-ended ethic would be cultivated from the collective ontological growth of individuals.

Indeed, the process of questioning parenting practice and its assumptions, and writing this thesis, has further advanced my own internal ethic. I can now recognise the times to put my own judgements aside (and the value I place on them), and to accept that others feel or act from the context of their own reality, and consider how to move forward with respect for multiple subjectivities or at least in solidarity with a common value, such as enduring existence. Such development is a long-term and complicated form of growth that rises out of relational experience and of unconditional questioning – it isn't easy, perfect, or quick. My open-ended ethic is still a work in progress, and perhaps that's because it has no end-point, continuing to evolve over time and within the contexts of each and every encounter.

7.5 Conclusion

The popular media suggests we have to train our babies to control themselves, to be independent, to sleep, and to obey, as if these were not things that had intrinsic value and would be learned naturally, as a matter of course, in human society.

(O'Mara, 1997, p. 4)

As O'Mara (1997) suggests above, perhaps we should question the need to train children to obey a rigid moral code, and *trust* that children can develop an internal ethic which is respectful of self and others through experiences and reflection on encounter. Such experiences and guidance may illuminate the mutual benefits of an open-ended ethic that is respectful of difference and context.

To critique something as seemingly innocent as calling a child 'naughty' may seem trivial, but it reveals a yet another symptom of dualism and domination lingering in modern societies. It tells of a history of moral judgement originating from the Christian story of Original Sin, and of the social order and security (for most) which arises from enforcing such conformity. Yet, such dominating conformity is potentially oppressive for interdependent kin. The punishments and other instruments which enforce such moral laws are instantly effective, but do not confer long-term relational connection, nor offer any means of understanding others in context or helping them to work through their struggles. Punishment brews character-shame which perpetuates dejection and unrest rather than motivating relational growth and responsibility as in internal forms of self-judgement (guilt).

Parenting which supports the formation of (and trust in) an internal open-ended ethic may be a practical means of moving beyond closed-ended morality, and foster

respect for the subjectivity of others. The process of setting empathetic limits, as described in my story, may be a way of modelling and embodying the use of an open-ended ethic in leadership or care-giving situations. Equally, re-conceptualising children as whole individuals with connective intentions, rather than blank slates to be filled or adults in training, means that not only do we trust that children will develop an internal ethic as a matter of course and encounter, but it acknowledges that they are whole and connective people who do not need to be trained to conform to a certain moral code.

Questioning practices, assumptions, and actions of self and other seems to be the most important step to take towards raising children through relational encounters and with relational world-views. These questions include: Why did I do that? Why did she do that? What do I value? What does she value? Why? What does this mean for myself and others? Where did this assumption come from? How else might I view this situation? It is only with questioning what is comfortable and assumed in our lives that we can begin to unveil hidden power structures and political and/or ethical frameworks flowing through our relationships. Once we can identify these features, it may then become possible to move beyond them (if needed), consider new structures, and merge relational intentions with relational practice, albeit imperfectly at times.

One slightly obvious, yet key, understanding that I am realising through this process, is that relationality and dualism are highly contextual and rarely clear-cut. Indeed, relational theories and dualistic theories can sometimes feel conceptually polarised – as if all encounters are either reciprocal or oppressive, or open-ended or closed-ended. This may not be so, even though it can sometimes be easy and necessary to

interpret and label encounters in such a way. Likewise, a feature of one dualism does not mean that every relationship with that quality will be dualistic. In the scope of living, relationships are a tapestry of struggle, of solidarity and dualism, and of travelling between and among different states of benefit and degradation.

If we live in webs of relation, then an infinite continuum of relationship 'types', including dualism, may co-exist and interact in their own right. Perhaps more reciprocal forms of relating cannot exist without the learning gained from experiences of dualism (interestingly, such a theory exists about the evolution of mutualistic gut bacteria from pathogens; see Herre et al (1999) and Leigh (2010)). In that case, what we are really aiming to achieve with relational philosophies and open-ended ethics is an *awareness* of and *sensitivity* to connection, difference, and dialogue so that we don't blindly squash our interdependent kin. The aim may not, or should not, be to exclusively form relationships and encounters which are mutually beneficial and reject all others. Such a conceptual state may be just as ignorant to the valuable richness of relational interaction as dualistic ones.

Chapter 8 Panpsychism and Parenting

San, The Princess Mononoke: Even if all the trees grow back, it won't be his forest anymore. The Forest Spirit is dead.

Prince Ashitaka: Never. He is life itself. He isn't dead, San. He is here with us now, telling us, it's time for both of us to live.

(From the animated film *Princess Mononoke,* by Miyazaki, 1997)

8.1 Introduction

In the previous chapters of this thesis, I came to understand how dualistic oppression may manifest in parenting, explored the fine line between oppression and leadership, and unveiled the background and dynamics of the moral and ethical frameworks embedded in relationships of care. In this final analysis chapter, I question: how do we discern who is worthy of moral and ethical consideration, and why? Panpsychism, or the theory that all matter is conscious, provides a theoretical platform to help me construct such an understanding.

My analysis of panpsychism will feed into an analysis of storytelling as a means of bringing such world-views into parenting practice. Mathews (2003) and Rose (1992; 2005; 2011) draw upon the value of fairy tales and storytelling to argue that such expressions of culture have a role in how people understand and value others. I will analyse the animated movie *Princess Mononoke* (Miyazaki, 1997), a favourite in our

household, to better understand how aspects of panpsychism may be embodied in children through such stories.

8.2 Lentil Friends

Figure 6 - Evelyn's friend, the jar of lentils. Photo credit: Kaseen Cook.

(This story is composed from journal notes in June 2015, Evelyn's age: 24 months)

"Mum, can lentils talk?"

As Evelyn's question reveals, inquiring after such unexpected qualities as the consciousness and linguistic capability of seemingly inanimate materials, was a big preoccupation of hers. I would often respond to these questions by pretending to be the voice of the lentils (or of whatever thing she wanted to talk to). I was never sure if this was the 'right' thing to do, as it seemed a bit dishonest. I couldn't tell if she believed the lentils were really talking or if she knew it was just me, but she loved it all the same. Indeed, Evelyn gave honorary life to and befriended many different materials. The jar of lentils slept in bed with us; she fed it food, and talked to it. After

a few months, the jar of lentils was forgotten about, replaced by other friends. While the jar of lentils was among one of her more imaginary friends, this ability and motivation to find friends in different materials was intriguing. I wondered if Evelyn's ability to make such friends revealed not just an active imagination and pretending, but a certain sensitivity to and openness to the mentality of matter.

(This story is composed from journal notes from June 2016, Evelyn's age: 3 years old)

One year later, I had the jar of lentils out on the table so I could take a picture of them for this chapter. Evelyn found the jar and said:

"Hey Mum, look at this!"

I couldn't help probing to see if she could reflect on her relationship with them:

"Oh yeah! Do you remember when you were friends with the lentils?"

Evelyn: "Yeah"

Me: "Why were you two friends?"

Evelyn: "Because they're cool. They're Dad's and beautiful colours."

Me: "Do you think lentils can talk?"

Evelyn: "Nah, they're our food. Can I touch them?"

Me: "Sure, just keep them in the jar please"

Evelyn proceeded to swirl her hands inside the jar of lentils, looking up with a smile to tell me:

"They made my hands filthy."

When Evelyn was younger, she was open with the lentils, and she engaged in a human-style dialogue with them (for example talking, feeding, and sleeping with them). A year later, she reflected that she was attracted to them because they were 'pretty colours', and perhaps because they were important to Dad who ate them regularly at the time. It was obvious that she eventually learned that lentils do not talk, even if I pretend to be lentils. Perhaps she never really believed they could talk, eat, or sleep, but rather she was just 'trying it on' with them for fun or to see what would happen. She can now reflect on one of their roles in our lives – they are food and apparently still fun to play with.

Perhaps, being sensitive to the relational capacity of others involves processes of being open during encounters, while also reflecting and being discerning. This process might involve refining the senses to detect the relational qualities of others, and of being open to the potential for relationships. It would seem, to understand potential relational participants 'well enough' to be discerning, without being oppressive or disconnecting, necessitates not only engagement, but ontological and epistemological views which facilitate an inner openness and capacity. The theory of panpsychism, which I will analyse in the following sections, may help me to understand the value of such relational openness, and how it may be fostered in parenting practice.

8.3 Panpsychism

As previously discussed, panpsychism suggests that matter is fundamentally conscious or mind-like, and as a result, connective (Karman, 2012; Mathews, 2003; Plumwood, 1993; Rucker, 2006; Skrbina, 2006). Or as Mathews (2003) describes:

> I characterise any view that reunites mentality with materiality, and thereby dismantles the foundational dualism of Western thought, as panpsychist, inasmuch as it attributes a psychic dimension to all physicality (Mathews, 2003, p.4).

As people may have little to no understanding of what it is 'like' to be anything other than themselves, describing matter in terms of mentality may have the undesirable consequence of defining experience and consciousness in human terms. Rather, in relation to panpsychism, mentality and consciousness usually describe the ability of matter to have subjective experiences, or to 'know what it is like to be something'. The term 'know' does not necessarily imply thinking or reflexivity as in human consciousness, but describes the rudimentary time-space awareness of matter (Karman, 2012; Smith, 1978; 2008).

Reductionist, rationalist, and positivist thinking would implore us to believe that if you crack open a tree and it has no brain, then it cannot be conscious or mind-like. From this perspective, brain equals consciousness, and subjectivity stems from the complex electrical communication within brain cells – it is nothing more than complex biological mechanics. The modern scientific paradigm is naturalistic, in that it suggests reality is governed by knowable and fixed 'truths' of the physical world which can be deduced from empirical observation (Klemm and Klink, 2008). Panpsychism sounds utterly ridiculous from this perspective. Not only is there no clear 'hard' evidence for the consciousness of matter, but such a notion defies

modern logical reasoning about the Newtonian physics of life and requires a mainstream reworking of what constitutes consciousness (Gao, 2008; Karman, 2012).

As Mathews (2003) describes, theories of consciousness have long been held in terms of mind, such as a spiritualist position, or in terms of matter, such as a materialist position. Mathews (2003) argues that these prevailing positions exemplify the mind-matter dualism, and thus deny the unification of mind and matter. Materialism, in particular, has dominated Western views of consciousness, and has fostered the perspective that the more-than-human parts of the world are merely inert 'things' that can be shaped and designed to meet the imagined ends of people (Mathews, 2003). Mathews (2003, p.27) defines materialism as:

> I propose here to vary traditional usage by adopting the term “materialist” to apply to any view that defines materiality or physicality in terms exclusive of mentality, regardless of whether or not further purely mentalistic or immaterial phenomena are posited. Materialism will, in other words, be understood as a theory of matter rather than of mind. (Mathews, 2003, p. 27)

Panpsychism provides a position on consciousness which argues that matter is fundamentally mind-like, and thus heals the theoretical divisions between spiritualism and materialism to create a different lens through which to see and understand the world.

There are two divisions of thought on the origins of consciousness, with respect to panpsychism. Materialists suggest that consciousness is emergent, in that ultimates (meaning the most basic division of matter – subatomic particle, string, wave, quark or other) are not conscious, but how they are arranged (such as into brains) suddenly

allows the emergence of conscience experience (Gao, 2008; Karman, 2012). In contrast, panpsychists believe that consciousness cannot suddenly appear as a result of some particular physical organisation and interaction of matter, therefore the most logical explanation is that ultimates are intrinsically conscious. If all of matter is made of ultimates, then all matter must be conscious in some form (Gao, 2008; Karman, 2012).

Quantum physics research supports the notion that all matter is fundamentally conscious. Quantum mechanics is the division of physics concerned with describing and defining the behaviour of atoms and their subatomic particles (Karman, 2012; Klemm and Klink, 2008). The behaviour of quantum particles is not always predictable or linear, and so phenomena in this field of science have led to theories about other mysteries which concern the interaction of the physical and non-physical world, such as the nature of consciousness (Klemm and Klink, 2008; Shan, 2008). Researchers such as Klemm and Klink (2008), and Gao (2008) have provided reasoned and experimental quantum evidence that the basic claim of panpsychism could be 'true' - that consciousness is a fundamental property of matter.

Gao (2008) argued that the 'causal efficacies of consciousness' (how mind effects matter) could be observed during the phenomena of Quantum Collapse. He describes consciousness as an interaction of physical processes and subjective experience. In quantum mechanics, the location of atomic particles can usually be predicted through mathematical equations which describe particles as 'waves'. During a quantum collapse the particles can no longer be described by this equation, and unexpectedly, the measured phenomena appears to be different to the observed phenomena. In quantum mechanics it is acknowledged that the observer interacts with the

phenomena and so has an effect on the phenomena which is different to the measured effect. As a result, the observer experiences states of matter that are different to what is measurable, and so, because of the effect observers have on the 'causal efficacies', Gao (2008) concludes that consciousness must be a fundamental property of matter. If consciousness were independent of physical matter (reductive and emergent), or contained within the brain, then consciousness would not have any effect on physical phenomena outside of the brain, such as quantum collapses.

Klemm and Klink (2008) describe a similar scientific/quantum reasoning for panpsychism. They define consciousness as the ability to choose among different alternatives, even if the entity cannot reflect upon the choice. As such, choices create a dialogue of meaning among conscious entities with outcomes that are neither random nor determined (but sometimes predictable). Klemm and Klink (2008) argue that quantum systems of microphysical particles show properties of choosing among alternatives. They provide several different examples of experiments where identically prepared particles repeatedly treated in the same way opted for different resulting energy levels. While the likelihood of the particle becoming any particular energy level could be calculated, there was still uncertainty in the result. They assert that opting among alternatives is evidence for the fundamental consciousness of matter. They reason that such a quantum explanation of consciousness is neither dualist, idealist, nor transcendental, but represents a third option that avoids materialism. It asserts that the fundamental proto-consciousness of matter is unreflective (not personal, no-self, "I" only arises from a reflective consciousness). The unreflected consciousness can only be defined by what it spontaneously produces, by its dialogue with others, by its intentionality, and the meaning created by such spontaneity.

Klemm and Klink (2008) recognise that their model of panpsychism does not answer the 'combination problem' of panpsychism, in which there is no explanation for the different complexities of consciousness. For example, people are composed of billions of unreflective conscious particles, yet those particles combine to form a whole 'person' with a distinctively complex and reflective 'human' consciousness. Indeed, how do we draw a boundary around what constitutes the whole and distinct subjective 'entity', the particle or the person, the experience or the physical? There is yet to be a promising quantum mechanical explanation for these different levels and combinations of consciousness.

Mathews' (1991) concepts of panpsychism were inspired, in part, by her early interest in the work of the 17th century philosopher Spinoza. Spinoza demonstrated the link between ethics and metaphysics through his 'proofs' about the form and properties of matter (Mathews, 1991). He describes 'bodies' as different modes of a common 'substance', described by qualitative attributes. Such bodies perceive themselves differently to how they are 'in themselves' (Mathews, 1991). 'Conatus' was a significant concept of Spinoza, and is described as a thing's inherent determination to want to exist, and therefore oppose destruction (Mathews, 1991, 2003). Spinoza's work laid the groundwork for Mathews' concepts of panpsychism by arguing that matter has a universal, yet differentiated, 'intellect' or consciousness, and because matter displays conatus, it warrants ethical consideration.

Mathews (2003) provides a metaphysical understanding of panpsychism, and touches upon spirituality as a part of understanding relationality:

To adopt a panpsychist outlook is to enter the terrain of "spirituality", since it opens up this possibility of communicative engagement with a responsive world that incites us to assume an attitude of eros in relation to it (Mathews, 2003, p.10).

Mathews (2006) recognises the significance of cross-cultural experiences of spirit phenomena as another understanding of the mentality of matter. She elsewhere notes that spirit phenomena occur across cultures, and are described within the assumptions and languages of each culture, but are united by a common – more than material – core:

> What to call such a view of reality, one that represents reality as consisting of matter, yes, but matter imbued with possibilities of inspiritment? I have argued that this view is reached by acknowledging the cross-cultural evidence of inspiritment emanating from a host of religious, spiritual and occult traditions, but that at the same time it requires that we step back from the specificities of these traditions. In light of this it would seem to be an error on our part to call such a view, as the Romantics did, panentheism, because the appeal to theism in panentheism is still culturally relative. That is to say, panentheism still belongs within a particular religious tradition: inspiritment is equated, in panentheism, with a culturally specific phenomenon, namely the manifestation of an infinite and all-powerful, providential deity. A more metaphysical, less religiously loaded name than 'panentheism' is needed. One possibility in this connection is panpsychism, or, like the Romantics seeking to avoid the reductivism of pantheism, we might coin the term panpsychism, to indicate that though everything is in mind, mind nevertheless by its very nature exceeds matter (Mathews, 2010, p. 235).

Furthermore, Mathews' version of panpsychism describes subjectivity as a result of reflexivity, which makes conscious existence a unified self-realising system

(Mathews, 2003, p. 74). This is in contrast to the quantum mechanics view of Klemm and Klink (2008), above, for whom matter is fundamentally unreflexive - they assert that reflexivity belongs to more complex forms of consciousness. Mathews (2003) also likens consciousness to energy, linking the objective study of consciousness and energy in quantum mechanics with the metaphysical experiences of spiritual consciousness as energy, both separate from and connected to the physical:

> Thus the primal field cannot be characterised in traditional dualistic terms, inasmuch as it enjoys aspects of both the traditional mental and the traditional physical without being reducible to either. In this respect the nature of this field is perhaps not so different from energy itself, which is now arguably the fundamental variable in physics. Energy is pure activity, which exists, or occurs, nonlocally, indivisibly and in potentia, in field form, as well as locally, divisibly, and in actuality, in material and other manifest particle forms. Energy is mysterious to physicists precisely in that its many nonclassical aspects seem more evocative of mentality then of physicality, as physicality was classically conceived (Mathews, 2003, p. 49-50).

Mathew's approach to panpsychism reawakens the importance of reflecting upon *culture* and belief (or subjective and experience-based knowing) in moving towards reciprocal relationships among humans and non-humans, and moving away from dualistic oppression and the instrumental treatment of significant others (Mathews 2003; 2005).

Likewise, Plumwood (1993) describes panpsychism as the mind-mindedness (or mind-like qualities) of matter, connected in dialogue. Plumwood (1993) argues that respect for the universal (but very diverse) intrinsic consciousness of matter warrants an inclusive ethical position towards all matter. This imperative is intended to counter the oppressive moral hierarchies of dualism, such as mind-body (Bannon,

2009; Plumwood, 1993; Skrbina, 2006). At first glance, this theory of panpsychism appears to imply that people value consciousness, and so if all matter is conscious, then we must consider all matter as equally worthy of ethical consideration. I challenge this assumption throughout the following analysis, and therefore evolve my understanding of why panpsychism is valuable to the theories and practices of relationality.

Plumwood identifies two types of panpsychism, strong and weak (1993; see also Andrews, 1998). Strong panpsychism is the view that full consciousness is present everywhere, in all matter. Weak panpsychism is the view that each 'natural entity' has distinctive mind-like qualities. Plumwood (1993) believes that weak panpsychism is a preferable concept to the strong version as it respects difference, rather than prescribing the same kind of consciousness to *all* matter. She proposes that weak panpsychism may be able to facilitate an inclusive ethic for all earth 'entities' which provides equally weighted concern for the subjective needs of diverse others. Plumwood (1993) defines respect as valuing an individual's subjectivity in its own right, regardless of our own position. She also asserts the importance of difference among individuals within relationships, as a rebuttal to the equally oppressive assimilating holism described by some deep ecological thinkers (Plumwood, 1993; see also Bannon, 2009). She goes on to specify that the mind-like qualities of all entities are defined by *intentionality*, which includes qualities such as sentience, choice, and goal orientation (Plumwood, 1993).

8.4 Moral Hierarchies: Evelyn and Lentils

As Andrews (1998) argues, Plumwood's thesis is (unintentionally) compatible with moral hierarchies (the very thing she warns against) due to the potential to rank the intentionality of entities based on the number, complexity, and integration of different kinds of intentionality. Such ranking can flow on to moral judgements and value ranking of others based on comparisons and assessments of various manifestations of intentionality. Furthermore, if one of the aims of her theories is to respect difference, then it is dangerous to assume that we can know anything about the mind-like qualities of other entities or matter. We cannot know if others experience intentionality, or if the qualities of intentionality can even be conceptualised for others by people in terms of what we experience as intentionality. Rather, respect for difference may not entail a respect for subjectivity, as the subjectivity of others can only be interpreted, not objectively known.

For example, I can grab Evelyn's lentil friends and acknowledge that we are connected through a common energy and like-mindedness. What ethical standards do I apply to them? Is it ok to cook and eat them? Will they feel pain like I can? How do I respect their reality when, apart from what I can sense of them, I don't know what they experience? They are red, hard, bumpy, and inanimate and don't appear to be alive or aware of me or display any concern for themselves. This is all I understand of my particular jar of lentils, so, instinctively I would not feel any ethical obligation toward them. How do I know if this ethical position (or non-position) based on my interpretation of my jar of lentils is actually respectful of their subjectivity (as Plumwood would want from an inclusive ethic)? Indeed, what constitutes an individual lentil entity? Evelyn considered the entire jar of lentils as a single entity,

but how do we know what constitutes an individual centre of subjectivity in the lentil's world?

My experience with lentils tells me it's ok to cook and eat them. I don't have to be concerned with respecting their subjectivity in order to flourish within my webs of relationality. Experience and reflection are critical for making these ethical judgements, because one needs to know what is 'good' for one's self to survive in webs of relationality. This does not mean that I do not have a significant and highly complex relationship with the lentils, after all they can flow through and become part of my body (as Rose (2002) describes of embodying place), but that my duty of care is more so to the *creation* and dynamics of lentils and those entities and systems which support such creation.

It would not serve me well to have the same ethical position towards Evelyn, someone with whom I am deeply interconnected and interdependent. In contrast to the lentils, I can sense and interpret Evelyn's qualities and experiences that appear like my own. Therefore, I can form an ethical and empathetic response to Evelyn as a whole interconnected person. My interpretations and ethical responses may come close to respecting her subjective needs, which would likely reflect how I would want to be treated in her position. As we are both people, we appear to share similar physical, spiritual, and mental desires and experiences. As Andrews (1998) points out, I feel an ethical stirring about Evelyn (in part) because I know that she cares about her own well-being, just as I do about myself. My ethical response is also shaped by culture, circumstance and many other factors. I consider Evelyn to be a single entity animated by a unique spirit. My duty of care, and subsequent values and

practices, towards Evelyn are not just toward her physical body, but towards her inner person as well.

As this example shows, and Andrews (1998) argues, the differentiation between different types of consciousness – the lentils with no spirit and Evelyn with a spirit – represent a moral hierarchy. I treat them and privilege them differently and instinctively approach them from different ethical positions, because I prioritise and place more value on those who have *qualities like my own* and are more likely to be significant interdependent participants.

However, Plumwood's inclusive ethic (which springs from her ranking the intentionality of consciousness) may not even be possible or warranted. Beyond what I can sense, I do not understand the subjective aspect of lentils. I cannot form a practical ethical response that is respectful, because I would ask, respectful of what? Their subjectivity? The very thing that I do not and cannot sense, experience, or know? The best I can do is to acknowledge their unique subjectivity, but this is not helpful for guiding my actions towards lentils. Practically, I cannot move on with my own life and do what I need to do to survive, if I do not have some form of moral hierarchy and discretion in how I relate to others. Therefore, the personal moral hierarchy is essential for making sense of the profound complexity of experience and allowing us to get on with living, despite the possibility that we may be unaware of our full impact on certain others.

Perhaps Plumwood was inspired to describe the different kinds of intentionality of matter, because intentionality is an important discriminating feature for herself and others. Judging others based on how they display intentionality, or perhaps how we imagine they experience/use intentionality, may be one important means of

discerning who is most like us, who is close to our own niche and interconnected to our own web of relations, who we might be able to find common ground with, and how we might be able to communicate with them. While there are obvious oppressive dualisms which are destructive to those who are engaged in them, I wonder if preventing the oppression of *all* others (like oppressing my jar lentils because I am ignorant of their subjectivity) is really problematic or even avoidable.

As we probably do not and cannot exist in 'perfect' webs of relationality, some members of our web of relation (or ourselves) will probably suffer some form of dualistic or instrumental treatment as a matter of course through the trials of relating, but this may not necessarily undermine the bigger picture. I would also assert that 'respect' - to *value* something in its own right, as Plumwood (1993) describes - may not be practically possible as 'value' is always dependent upon the perspective which produces it. In other words, one cannot separate the subjectivity of self and other when valuing the other 'in its own right' – we cannot fully know what its 'own right' is. To value something with openness should not discount the role of self, but rather examine the perspective and judgements of self while interpreting and forming understandings of the other. In this case, I would rework respect (in line with Mathews (2003)) to mean being open to and engaged with the subjectivity of the other, but to also 'let it be'.

Rather than interpreting Andrews' (1998) criticism as degrading the value of panpsychism, it highlights the *relational need for moral hierarchies* in forming and maintaining functional webs of relation, and it suggests a different, yet equally critical, role for panpsychism – nurturing relational *openness*. This critique identifies that moral hierarchies help us to prioritise a vast diversity of relationships of

interdependence. As not all relationships are the same, they cannot be expected to receive equal respect or equal consideration. Additionally, hierarchical relationships do not automatically entail dualism or destructive instrumentalism.

8.5 The Panpsychist Value of Princess Mononoke

As previously described, Evelyn's curiosity about the like-mindedness of her lentil friends demonstrates a particular capacity and willingness to connect and communicate with others, particularly non-human others. If panpsychism obliges people to be open to the relationality of others, how might parents support and further the ontological, epistemological, and cultural development such openness in their children?

As Mathews (2003) discusses, fairy tales are a valuable means of embodying panpsychism through culture:

> When the subjectivity of self is permeated by the subjectivity of the other, it is transformed, and this transformation will manifest outwardly in a change of material aspect. […] We have a word for the panpsychist ambience of the fairy tale: enchantment. […] A land or place is enchanted if it has been called up, its subjectivity rendered responsive to self by self's invocation of it (Mathews, 2003, p.18).

It seems fitting then, that I analyse the panpsychic qualities and value of an 'enchanting fairy tale' which has been much loved by Evelyn and myself.

Studio Ghibli movies are a particular breed of Japanese animé written and directed by Hayao Miyazaki. Evelyn's all-time most watched movie was, and still is, *Princess Mononoke* (Miyazaki, 1997). Interestingly, a selection of his movies are of

interest to social researchers, and analysed in the academic literature due to their richly presented 'environmental', political, and cultural themes, including the use of strong female characters (Mayumi et al, 2005).

Figure 7 - Characters of *Princess Mononoke*. Photo credit: Miyazaki, 1997 and Studio Ghibli.

Princess Mononoke (Miyazaki, 1997) has particularly strong and complex relational themes that combine elements of environmental destruction and industrialisation, cultural politics, economics, dualism and instrumentalism, panpsychism, animism, spirit and the super-natural, activism, fitting-in, and the interdependence of complex relational webs (Mayumi et al, 2005; Smith and Parsons, 2012). *Princess Mononoke* is set in Japan's fictional distant past. It is the tale of Ashitaka, the young prince of a long-hidden tribe of people who live in the forest and ride red elk.

As the story opens, an angry Boar God, turned hate-filled daemon, charges toward their settlement. Ashitaka leaps into action, flighting the beast from the back of his elk to save his community. As he kills the daemon, it touches his arm and so curses him with its hate and condemns him to die slowly and painfully. An iron bullet is

found inside the giant Boar, which is thought to be the cause of its hatred toward people.

Ashitaka decides to travel the land to discover who shot the Boar and caused unrest, and to plead with the forest spirit to save his life from the curse. Along his journey to find the source of the iron, he encounters Gods and spirits of the forest, violent people, politics of greed, and environmental destruction (and anger towards humans) caused by the mining operation of Iron Town. He also meets San (Princess Mononoke, or Spirit Princess), who is the adopted human daughter of the Wolf Gods. She hates humans and the destruction to her forest home caused by Iron Town. Ashitaka is attracted to her and seeks her help to find the forest spirit. He must convince her that he is not like the other violent people, and that he cares about the forest and her.

He also meets the dominating female leader of Iron Town, Lady Eboshi, who endeavours to kill the forest spirit to stop the forest animals and spirits attacking her mining operation. It was her bullet that set the Boar God charging into Ashitaka's village. It is apparent that a war is building between the forest and the people of Iron Town, and Ashitaka tries to mediate the hate fuelled conflict and insists that people and the forest can live together. His argument fails to sway Lady Eboshi, who is also possessed with a hateful daemon.

When war breaks out, San fights against the humans with the Gods, and Ashitaka remains neutral, trying to prevent the forest spirits and the people of Iron Town from being killed. The forest, its sprits, animals, and Gods suffer great losses in the war. Ashitaka fails to protect the forest spirit, who is beheaded, transforming into a large

walking demon, leaving indiscriminate death (represented by black goo) for people and the forest in its path as it searches for its stolen head.

San and Ashitaka eventually rescue the head of the forest spirit from Lady Eboshi's men, and return it. A great energy explodes from the reunited forest sprit, and our heroes wake to a quiet and empty landscape of death and destruction. Then, suddenly, it begins to rebirth, green plants growing out of every orifice, growing over the town and the forest. The spirits and Gods are no longer walking beasts, but their spirit endures in the eternal rebirth of life. The movie closes with San deciding to live in the forest, unable to reconcile with her humanity, and Ashitaka returns to Iron Town to help rebuild. Both characters, forever transformed, vow to see each other again.

The themes of this movie depict a lived panpsychism, where not only is every part of the world (particularly plants and animals) conscious and full of spirit (many of which are also physical), but Ashitaka, in an effort to repair the relationship between the forest and humans, champions the openness to relationality and reflexivity endeared by panpsychism. This makes it more than just conceptual, but relationally functional. He is neutral in his encounters with the forest beings and the humans, encouraging dialogue and engagement, while trying to make both sides aware of their 'blind' hate. Indeed, this blindness speaks of the perils of dualism, where a lack of communication and experience with one another (coupled with physical separation) allows for the justification of instrumentalism (such as the careless mining of the forest) and the justification of uninformed and destructive hate (such as the hateful attacks towards the people launched from the forest beings).

There are also many levels of moral hierarchy in this story. There is a functional level of moral hierarchy where life is valued from the human perspective based on intertwined meaning and functionality. For example, the lives of the central human characters and forest Gods are placed at the highest value, as they are the most significant players in the greater relationality. This is followed by the plants, animals, town folk, and tree/animals sprits who play supporting roles to the central relationships. Lastly, the substrate on which the story unfolds is valued for its meaning to other relationships, such as its role as a medium or substrate for the rebirth of others, as a mineral to be consumed, or as a place of value to be fought over, but it is not clearly an active agent in its own right.

There are also moral hierarchies of destruction, where both the forest creatures and the Iron Town humans view themselves as morally superior to the other, leading to the afore mentioned instrumentalism and conflict launched from both sides. Indeed, every being in the movie projects its own hierarchy of value, which layer and interact with others. This story highlights that moral hierarchy, or valuing different relationships and roles with discretion, is relationally intrinsic and not necessarily dualistic. Rather discretion can focus action on significant participants, while dualistic moral hierarchies can be oppressive and destructive when they are in conjunction with other features, such as instrumentalism.

Smith and Parsons (2012) argue that the movie is anthropocentric because it shows concern for human survival. I would disagree with this interpretation because the movie also shows concern for the forests survival, as well as how the survival of humans and the forest are intertwined. As described in *Chapter 6*, concern for ones self is as important to relationality as concern for the other. The movie is written for

people, by people, so human perspectives are very important to the meaning of the movie (particularly as we can only *imagine* the perspectives of the forest), but this does not make them anthropocentric, because the meanings derived from the human perspectives speak about caring for (or destroying) ecological others – they speak about relationality, not '–centrism'. Indeed, neither the forest nor the people are depicted as 'right' or superior from the perspective of the central character Ashitaka. Both are responsible for the dysfunction of their relationship, are powerful and capable in different ways, and suffer greatly as a result of their resistance to dialogue and hatred for one another.

As in many of Miyazaki's movies, female characters play strong roles which mediate politics, connect with the spiritual, and balance or disrupt relationships (Smith and Parsons, 2012). Both Lady Eboshi and San play powerful and pivotal roles in the movie, representing opposing sides of the conflict, mediated by the masculine reasoning of Ashitaka. In Miyazaki's movies, the strong role of women and the feminine, and the depiction of relationships unfolding along a continuum of various relational qualities, bears similar ontological and epistemological grounding to the various streams of ecofeminism. This movie also rejects some of the principles of deep ecology by depicting beings and forces on all sides of the conflict, human and forest alike, as responsible for the conflict and destruction in the movie, rather than showing people as the accountable perpetrators and the forest as a helpless victim (Smith and Parsons, 2012).

Smith and Parsons (2012) argue that *Princess Mononoke* calls children to engage in environmental activism. I would similarly argue that these stories also call children and adults to reconsider the spiritual and mental qualities of matter and how

important such relational ontological growth is to personal and relational well-being. In the wake of such destructive relationships, this movie also offers the hopeful panpsychist message that because consciousness (represented by spirit in the movie) is eternal and everywhere, that no matter how destructive relationships become, there is always hope in personal and interpersonal rebirth and growth. Failure can be both an end and a beginning, and conflict can create productive tension and catalyse a resolution. The qualities of relationships, including those that may be described as dualistic, exist on a continuum and have tangled, and spatio-temporally, dynamic roles in the rise and fall of beings, but spirit and consciousness are an enduring and evolving constant.

Rose's (1992; 2005) contribution to an understanding of panpsychism is much more practical and rooted in experience, than that of Mathews and Plumwood. She derives her relational knowledge from the time she spent learning about people's place in 'country' with the Yarralin Aboriginals (Rose, 1992; 2005). As I will explore in the proceeding section, panpsychism, when experienced as a way of life, reveals a much greater depth to the connection between the theory of panpsychism and *living* panpsychism in space and time.

8.6 Aboriginal Culture and Storytelling

8.6.1 Yarralin Panpsychism

It is one thing to accept panpsychism as a theory or belief on a superficial or intellectual level, and quite another when it is a lived and purposeful 'philosophical ecology' (a term used by Rose (2005) that describes our dynamic place in the world)

(Rose, 2005). For two years, Rose participated in the lives of the Yarralin people of the Victoria River Valley in the Northern Territory of Australia. The Yarralin belief system could be identified as panpsychist and animist (imagining or treating animals as similarly cultured people). As described by Rose (1992):

> Yarralin people assume, usually on the basis of specifiable evidence, that all species (some plants may be an exception) are made up of conscious and thinking individuals who speak, fight, plan, joke, perform rituals (men's and women's), according to their own Law (Rose, 1992, p. 46).

The form of panpsychism practised by the Yarralin, and its role in moral obligations to others, is contextually complicated. It is not simply a matter of conceptualising all matter as conscious and valuing it all equally. In this case, consciousness and connectivity (panpsychism) does not warrant moral obligation on its own, but relationality and the meaning and context of connections is key to forming moral responses.

Rose (1992) describes the concept/practice/life of 'Dreaming' in Yarralin culture. She identifies the Yarralin Dreaming as a translated term which describes a range of entities and concepts which celebrate and guide life. It can refer to creative beings, their actions, the time period when these things occurred, and relationships among people and others. Dreaming also speaks about Law, which are the Yarralin's open-ended guidelines for how life should be lived. As Rose (1992) explains:

> But what Law seems most fundamentally to be about is relationships. Dreamings determined sets of moral relationships-country to country, country to plant and animal species, people to country, people to species, people to people. Individuals of any species come and go, but the underlying relationships persist. Law is a serious life and

> death business for individuals and for the world; it tells how the world hangs together. To disregard the Law would be to disregard the source of life and thus to allow the cosmos to fall apart (Rose, 1992, p. 56).

The relationships which occur in Dreaming follow four general 'meta-rules' of Law. The first rule describes relational webs which are in balance, where every entity sustains it self in concert with caring for others. The second describes reciprocal communication as a moral obligation, and requires individuals to engage with, respond to and understand others. The third rule is to block, rather than dominate, conflicting relationships, so as to maintain balance. The fourth rule describes all entities as autonomous, which means that no entity is the superior of any other. This rule respects that different groups have different Laws, but leadership and dependence are still important within groups adhering to the same Laws (Rose, 1992).

8.6.2 Flying Fox Dreaming Stories

The flying fox is an integral part of the Yarralin people. Flying foxes feature in Dreaming stories and shape-shift among humans and flying foxes revealing their tangled intimacy with people (Rose, 1992; 2011; 2012):

> Most Dreamings finished by changing to become as they now are. No longer walking in human form, flying fox Dreamings, for example, 'changed over' into the flying foxes we now know. Most Dreaming beings are no longer with us in their original Dreaming form. Rather, Dreaming power exists in the sites where the Dreamings were before, and all the living species of earth derive their life from these sites. […] The

> disjunction involved in changing over can be drawn along a number of lines, but consciousness and responsibility have not been altered (Rose, 1992, p. 46).

Flying foxes are also apart of matrilineal kin groups (Rose, 1992). These groups comprise people and flying foxes, where people's inclusion in the group is because their mother was a flying fox person. The members of the group, both human and animal, and considered to share the same flesh from generation to generation, and as such are obliged to care for one another.

According to one Yarralin story, flying foxes also ask the Rainbow Snake to come out of the river and bring on the rains when the land becomes very dry. The flying foxes move down from the highlands as the ground dries and follow the succession of flowering plants down to the river. When they get to the river, they swing in the trees over the river and tell the Rainbow Snake to make it rain (Rose, 2011). Flying foxes are considered to be like people, and/or to have once been people in their Dreaming. Rose (2011) tells an account of a story which imagines flying foxes as having human personalities:

> One of my teachers was Daly Pulkara, a man with a good fund of flying fox stories. We were watching the flyout one evening, and he pointed out something interesting. The crowd flew over, and then, after the mob was well on its way, a few turned back. A bit later, stragglers appeared, following the others but not quite catching up. 'The old people always said those blokes forgot their axes', Daly told me. I felt like a bit of a straggler myself as I tried to catch the drift of the story. Of course, they were shape-shifters, and when they were men they would have carried axes. 'They're always like that', Daly said, 'one or two are back behind. That's why the old people said they forgot their axes, they had to go back to camp and get them'. […] Within an animist worldview, flying foxes are persons, and like any group of human persons some are a

> bit sloppy, forgetting their axes when they go out foraging, dragging along behind, always a bit out of step (Rose, 2011, no page number).

Not only do flying foxes signal the approach of the rainy season, they are also a keystone species and have co-evolved with flowering plants as pollen and seed dispersers (Rose, 2012). They are able to travel long distances and provide for a more diverse gene flow among flowering plants (Rose, 2012). Indeed, how people relate to the flying fox, even imaginatively through story, is important for their own survival both through the ecological knowledge provided by the flying fox as well as in its role in maintaining local flowering plants and the webs of connection which are entangled with them. It is only through intimate and multi-generational experience with flying foxes and their webs that such knowledge has developed as a matter of course. Incorporating flying foxes into family groups ensures that they retain value, knowledge, and meaning to a group of people for future generations, and that they, their landscapes, and their kin will be cared for and deeply loved as blood relatives (Rose, 1992).

It is interesting to consider that both objective science and intergenerational experience have come to the conclusion that the flying fox is important to people and larger landscapes, yet have acted upon and interpreted these findings in very diverse ways – the latter in isolating/conserving ways, and the other in engaged/intimate ways. This speaks about the divergence of connectivity with non-humans among these groups and their differing life and death needs for relationality – science (or the people behind it) being somewhat removed from the life and death of the flying fox value it as a theorised keystone species, whereas the Yarralin need to be engaged with the flying fox as a means of life and death in their country (Rose, 2005; 2008; Muir et al, 2010).

As Rose (2002) describes, ethics in Yarralin country takes the form of a situated dialogue with others that is characteristically open and reflexive, such as their meaningful dialogue with flying foxes.

> The first is that dialogue begins where one is, and thus is always situated; the second is that dialogue is open, and thus that the outcome is not known in advance. Openness produces reflexivity, so that one's own ground becomes destabilized. In open dialogue one holds one's self available to be surprised, to be challenged, and to be changed (Rose, 2002, p. 175).

This quote supports the criticism that panpsychism in and of itself does not warrant ethical inclusiveness for all. This is because it reveals that the value of such a belief system is not in mandating indiscriminate inclusiveness, but in creating ontological openness to relationality. If all matter is connective and comprised of a fluid conscious fabric, then all matter is a potential relational participant – suddenly we become ontologically sensitive to and aware of relationality. When one is open to relationality, our 'ethic' is then one of communication, responses, understanding, and evaluation about the meaning and significance of the relationship to ourselves and others with whom we are connected.

Indeed, not all encounters will be significant, as not all relational others are significant to our survival or well-being, and so a blind inclusive ethic or valuing *all* others (as described by Plumwood, 1993) *because* of universal consciousness, is not warranted (or practically possible). When the value of panpsychism is re-conceptualised as a belief system, or a philosophical ecology (see Rose, 2005), rather than used as evidence or reasoning to pursue an inclusive ethic, proving the phenomenon of panpsychism becomes unimportant (Muir et al, 2010; Rose, 2008).

It does not matter if the flying foxes in the previous story are real people coming back to get their axes, it is the meaning and knowledge (to self, to people) that emerges from such an open belief in the mind-like qualities of the flying fox, and all of its interconnections, that is significant for relational reciprocity within greater webs and landscapes of relation. Openness, dialogue, reflexivity, understanding and judgement that flow from panpsychism are critical for discerning who is most important and why (Rose, 2005; 2008). An inclusive ethic unintentionally ignores these features of relationality by mandating inclusion based on a common consciousness (rather than selectively evaluating the unique context and meaning of each encounter), and so defeats its own purpose to facilitate respectful engagement in rich, diverse, and reciprocal relationships.

8.7 The Importance of Epistemology

As I outlined above, we go through the process of producing accounts and theories of how panpsychism might work based on the cultures, philosophies, experiential knowledge, and quantum physics which supports panpsychist claims of connectivity and consciousness. While inquiring minds strive to understand the 'truth' of concepts, it is the experience of panpsychism, rather than the evidence for it, which supports the value and function of panpsychist beliefs, such as those held by the Yarralin.

In the Yarralin example, panpsychism is an embedded part of culture and thought – it occurs as a matter of course through experience and intergenerational knowledge, and is evidenced through interpreted observations which support relationships that

work. From a western perspective, Yarralin panpsychism would appear to be rooted in belief and tradition. Yarralin belief in a widespread connective conscious developed from hundreds of generations of collective experience and communication with webs of survival (Rose, 1992; 2005; 2008). Panpsychism embodied their experience of reality through a relationally purposeful growth and evolution. The panpsychist perspective is 'proved/real/justified' for them because it 'works' and 'balances' life. Such a perspective and the culture and the relationships which flow from it support their survival in country – panpsychism is a *real* time-space experience of life (Dukor, 2011; Muir et al, 2001; Rose, 2008).

For those of us who do not have a panpsychist lineage, and are somewhat disconnected and distracted from country (or the country that supports us is not the one we experience, such as through imported goods), there is no obvious or immediate catalyst or imperative to grow such a relational belief and to embody it with the local and distant countries which support our survival. Dukor (2011) makes a similar observation of Black African animism/panpsychism. He notes that both western/scientific and indigenous/lived forms of panpsychism are based on some form of rationality, but it is the indigenous (lived) panpsychism that is set apart as being both structural and functional as well as embedded in tradition. While western/scientific forms of panpsychism are viewed as a superficial rationalised theories, lived panpsychism is what he calls is a 'structural functional panpsychic communicative structure'.

Western ideas of panpsychism focus on proving its merit to science (such as in quantum mechanics) or on proving the intellectual rigour and the soundness of its logic (again, also rooted in a tradition of positivism). I come from a western,

scientific, materialist background, and many of my target audience members may also come from a similar ontological background. As such, proving the logical and objective merit of panpsychism forms an important means of validating the adoption of such an idea. Indeed, I instinctively treat panpsychism as a possible theory of existence, rather than as a matter-of-fact in my everyday life.

How we approach panpsychism (its epistemology), as a given or belief entrenched in experience and tradition, or as a questionable theory to be proved, makes a difference to its relational usefulness. As Klemm and Klink (2008) describe below, panpsychism is of little use to scientific cultures, because science is all-knowing. There is no perceived *need* for concepts of relationality or a panpsychist perspective:

> The modern scientific view has no need for either universal mentalism or dualism in philosophy. Its explanations of phenomena (and all phenomena are, according to modern science, in principle physical phenomena) are entirely naturalistic. Consider Newtonian mechanics, through which the modern scientific view of the universe became compelling and dominant in the Western tradition, rendering the Cartesian line of thought an idiosyncratic branch of speculative philosophy that scientists can well ignore. In their initial reception, the principles of Newtonian mechanics seemed utterly universal and necessary. Their many successes raised the question: Do Newtonian principles exhaustively explain all of reality, including mental reality? If so, phenomenology and its domain—the first-person experience of conscious states—lose their viability. Instead, the prospect looms of a deterministic, utterly material universe, completely knowable and predictable by science (Klemm and Klink, 2008, p. 309).

To science and science based cultures, panpsychism is, at best, an interesting theory of existence, one possibility among many, but not something which touches everyday

life. The leap from panpsychism as theory to panpsychism as a functional ontology is not a simple matter of accepting a theory, it goes much deeper, and it requires direct embeddment in life and death relationships that necessitate a panpsychist ontology among other things like co-created cultures, traditions, histories and lineages (Dukor, 2011).

While I believe that all matter is composed of a connective consciousness and subjectivity, and that there is more to existence than we can observe or measure, I formed such a belief mostly through exposure to collaborating stories about extrasensory experiences and through reflexivity about my own experiences in this analysis. This belief is growing intellectually and theoretically, but it's not quite an integral part of my reality yet – my survival does not depend upon it. Indeed, such a belief has made me feel more open to the potential relationships around me, but in practice, growth has really only occurred with those most close to me, such as with family, friends and my animals. The usefulness of panpsychism to those who do not have a panpsychist history/lineage, and who do not really have a personal need for such a belief, presents a tricky problem for those like Plumwood and Mathews who can see how valuable such an ontology (and its associated culture) would be to mainstream human society.

Rose's work demonstrates that to the Yarralin people, panpsychism's relational value is as an embedded, life and death, belief system which obliges its followers to relational openness, reflexivity, responsibility, and discretion with others. In the context of parenting, sharing stories, such as that of *Princess Mononoke* as above, may be one way to encourage or support the ontological ground work which may one day support a deeply felt panpsychist embeddment in webs of relationality.

Storytelling is a significant means of relational knowledge transfer and expression in Yarralin country, as demonstrated by the stories of Flying Foxes (Rose, 1992; 2005; 2011), and so perhaps a means of not only encouraging relational openness, but to help discern and reflect upon the significance of different relational encounters which are felt in a particular place.

8.8 Context and Locality in Panpsychist Storytelling

As in Yarralin panpsychism, for storytelling to be a useful tool for imparting panpsychist knowledge, the story needs to be relevant to local experienced contexts, and local webs of relationality need to be continuous, rather than outsourced (Muir et al, 2010; Rose, 2005; 2008). While the *Princess Mononoke* story certainly opened our minds to complex relationality applicable to 'environmental' crises, it is not relevant or useful to our personal lives because many of our sustaining relationships do not occur on our own land, but are outsourced to shops and other hidden, often distant, localities.

For example, if we consider Evelyn's relationship with the jar of lentils, we did not grow or harvest the lentils ourselves, we bought them at the store. Evelyn's most significant experiences with the lentils were limited to buying, eating, and playing with them. The systems and tangled relationships which brought about their creation are somewhat fragmented and distant to us ('lentil dreaming' is not in our country, we are disconnected from it) (Plumwood, 2008). As Plumwood (2008) describes of these 'shadow places':

> In the context of the dominant global consciousness, ideals of dwelling compound this by encouraging us to direct our honouring of place towards an 'official' singular idealised place consciously identified with self, while disregarding the many unrecognised, shadow places that provide our material and ecological support, most of which, in a global market, are likely to elude our knowledge and responsibility (Plumwood, 2008, no page number).

It is assumed, based on our experience, that lentils will always be available for us to buy in the shops, regardless of our relationships within greater webs of relationality, and whether we embody their value or not (such as through storytelling and other channels of panpsychism). Indeed, if lentils were suddenly unavailable at the shops, we would just eat something else, with little or no change to our own well-being.

I can only imagine how Evelyn's relationship with the lentils would have evolved if we grew them ourselves (in fact, we don't grow any of our own food), if our webs and culture of relationality effected their creation, if their creation was not a constant given but always pending on relationality, and if they were perceived as a significant and valuable part of our own creation and nourishment. In this reality, "Mum, can lentils talk?" may have been answered with a meaningful and imaginative story about talking lentils, embedded with relational knowledge that may one day help her to sustain the creation of lentils. In this case, panpsychism also implores us to create relationships that we can touch and feel, which may imply locality (insomuch that we are connective/embedded/aware participants). For such a belief to be useful, we need to sustain our lives with *felt* resources which we can experience within greater webs, that are accessible for dialogue, and whose value imminently impends on our own lives and culture.

In the Yarralin culture, stories are embedded with knowledge that can be experienced, and such stories are not just for children, but are for all ages, and treated with reverence as 'real' and valuable (Rose, 1992; 2005; 2011). In contrast, many children's stories in Australian culture are treated superficially as entertainment or as a tool for learning to read, talk, create and/or learn moral lessons. There are thousands of stories for children, usually delivered through books, television and music. Adults rarely consider these stories as important to their own lives, or express belief in or stress the importance of the subject matter. They are of fictional characters that children never or rarely encounter in lived experience. If they do encounter them in lived experience there is little meaningful connection to the story (because the story was likely forgotten and/or not relevant to lived experience). Mathews (2003) describes the background presence of fairy tales and panpsychism in western culture:

> Fairy tales represent a surprisingly vital residue of archaic consciousness in the modern episteme. We are all brought up on fairy tales or the echoes thereof in other fiction. These stories have been relegated to the domestic sphere where they lead an underground but enduring life as children's lore, handed from one generation to the next primarily by mothers and other female carers. The consciousness expressed in fairy tales is thus deeply familiar to us even while it is roundly contradicted and repudiated by every tenet, every founding principle, of modern life (Mathews, 2003, p.17).

Animism features frequently in western children's stories, and sometimes that follows an underlying panpsychist belief, but the connection between lived experience and stories is limited. Stories often contain limited ecological or relational knowledge, and they are rarely told, connected or reflected upon during lived

encounters. As such, in conjunction with situating the story locally in some way, stories like *Princess Mononoke* might be more likely to provide ontological guidance if caregivers create a dialogue with children about the story and relate it to lived experiences in particular places of significance.

Despite watching *Princess Mononoke* many times (sometimes every night for several days) over the past year, Evelyn and I rarely had discussions about the relational themes in the movie, beyond just reflecting some obvious and interesting plot points. After watching the movie recently, I decided to ask Evelyn about the meanings she derived from it:

(Conversation from July 2016, Evelyn's age: 3.5 years old)

Me: "Hey, Evelyn, what do you think about the movie Princess Mononoke?"

Evelyn: "Good"

Me: "Hummm, yeah, I think it's a great movie too. Do you think that our trees on the block [of land] have spirits too?"

Evelyn: "No, we don't have a Forest Spirit. The trees are not alive."

Me: "I think that the movie was trying to show us that life is all around, and that it always comes back, even when Daemons and Gods and humans fight and destroy it."

Evelyn seemed uninterested and slightly suspicious of my conversation about the movie, and then changed the topic to a more interesting aspect of the movie.

Evelyn, excitedly yells: "The pig was a daemon and had blood coming out of his mouth! Ashitaka killed him!"

Clearly, more dialogue, local experience relating to the story (such as experiences relating to the movie in our own forest), and perhaps more maturity is needed to understand the significance of the movie, and of panpsychism in our own lives.

8.9 Conclusion

Panpsychism acknowledges that experience and subjectivity are intrinsic to all matter, but I conclude that this does not warrant the universal adoption of an inclusive ethic, neither does it provide a practical means of living such an ethic. Panpsychism is valuable because it entails the recognition of a connective conscious and implores individuals to develop an ontological perspective which is open to the potential for relationality with any non-human other, and it acknowledges the connective fabric and meaning-making of the universe. Openness to relationality, while engaged in relational experience, gives way to reflexivity about those experiences. Such reflexivity includes discernment and judgement as to the meaning and significance of relationships to ones self. Different others have different places in the moral hierarchy of the person, and so different relationships receive different forms and quantities of time/space/value/cultural resources and respect. Values and their hierarchies do not create dualism, they are intrinsic to relationships in an infinitely complex world, reciprocal or not.

From a practical standpoint, moral hierarchies are an important part of focusing on those kin which are most significant to our web of survival. Indeed, the Yarralin

seemed to form more direct intimate and communicative relationships with animals that were observed or imagined as human-like (like the flying fox), while other less human-like matter, like plants and landscape features, were valued because of their meaning as substrates in larger webs of relation (such as a Dreaming site which holds complex ecological and cultural knowledge) or because of their direct utility or consumption (such as food) (Rose, 1992; 2008; 2011). Respect did not necessarily take the form of valuing the subjectivity of others in their own right (as Plumwood 1993 suggests it should be), but rather others were interpreted and understood through highly experiential, yet very human perspectives and meanings. As I learned from the Yarralin stories of flying foxes, respect for significant interdependent kin didn't necessarily require an accurate understanding of their subjectivity, rather it constituted the formation of an understanding that was relationally purposeful and based on deep experiences. This may mean that (Plumwood's) rules, such as 'respecting difference' and 'intentionality', need not be set in stone for panpsychism to be 'fit for purpose'.

As in the Yarralin and *Princess Mononoke* examples, storytelling can facilitate an understanding of the greater webs of interdependence in a particular locality, including the development of internal ethical responses to relational values. These examples of storytelling endeared panpsychist themes through the imaginative animation of the other-than-human world. Storytelling revealed that panpsychism may be more useful to the praxis of environmental scholarship as an underlying assumption about life (or a functional and experienced belief about the world), rather than as a 'proved' theory which describes the physics of consciousness and mandates an inclusive ethic.

Moreover, for storytelling to have significant meanings for children beyond the screen, parents and carers need to talk about the relational themes of stories in conjunction with local experiences of interconnection. Storytellers prime the ontological and epistemological attitudes of their audience, but it takes other people to 'pull out', unpack, and reflect upon its significant themes, and make the meaning of stories relevant in lived practice and experienced relationships. Furthermore, if the webs of relationality described in stories are not situated within the context of local relationships or within reach of dialogue (or not interpreted to have local meanings), then they may fail to have much ontological or epistemological impact.

In closing, I think we must accept that there is no flawless ethic or way of relating with others – panpsychism does not promise relational perfection, it merely beats a path of *relational possibility*. Our relationships with different kin are going to be different from each other. Some we will understand better than others, some we will respect better than others, and ultimately some kin will get squashed while others won't. Relationality entails a range of experiences which exist along a continuum, and flow through time and space, continually changing and avoiding permanent definition. Ecofeminists or ecophilosophers don't need to describe or achieve some grand perfection of relationality with the world that is logically solid and rigorous. The aims of such scholars may really only need to entail growing a relational awareness of individuals to sustain a dialogue with significant kin and country. This can take many forms. Concepts of relationality can only ever be 'good enough', and what constitutes 'good enough' is always going to be contextually contingent and a matter of perspective.

In the next chapter, the synthesis and conclusion, I will explore the importance of open and intimate experience with matter and interdependent others. Through relational experience and engagement, our ethical response may be formed as a matter of course within the growth of relational encounters, rather than as a matter determined by indiscriminately imposed concepts, such as an inclusive ethic. That dialogue can be hierarchical and respectful, but the distinction is context-dependent and thus somewhat irrelevant. Rather, it is the complex relational discernment and experimentation which comes with *engagement* that situates our place amongst others.

Chapter 9 Synthesis and Conclusion

In this chapter, I will consider my analysis as a whole, and pull out and clarify the most significant findings of this work. I will frame them within the bigger picture of relationality as well as emphasise why certain findings contribute to addressing the aims of this thesis – to strengthen and understand the dialogue between parenting and relational philosophies, especially in regards to relational praxis.

9.1 An Evolved Understanding of Relationality

9.1.1 Integration of Key Findings

As I have described throughout this thesis, theories of relationality challenge the instrumental and one-sided approaches toward others, and adopt an ontological and epistemological repositioning focused on the connective, interactive, subjective, contextual, and responsive aspects of self and other. These ideas of relationality reflect how we would *like* to live, but they cannot guarantee *what is* or *can be* lived. Indeed, it is unlikely that a perfect praxis will come from a perfected theory.

Throughout this thesis, dualistic ideologies and practices have been assumed or framed as antagonists to the type of relationality proposed by such scholarship. As discussed previously, Plumwood (1993) is concerned with dismantling dualisms in a way which seamlessly reconnects the fragmented participants and their diverse qualities (Booth, 2013; Mathews, 2017; Plumwood, 1993). She argues that moving from one extreme, like an oppressive patriarchy, to another, such as an ecofemist matriarchy, does not resolve the dysfunctional or oppressive qualities of such

relationships. Moving between extremes (in both theory and practice), or simply rejecting and redefining the parts of relationships, neglects a consideration of the infinite diversity of entities, their connections, and their experiences as they are, embedded within unique contexts and subjective landscapes (Booth, 2013; Mathews, 2017; Plumwood, 1993).

As I have come to understand, relationships are blurred and smeared on a continuum, and the complexity of spatial and temporal relations often defy simple definition or hard boundaries. It is easy to slip into thinking about dualism, relationality, and similar concepts as simple things to be used, or as occurrences which happen within defined boundaries. Many of my parenting experiences, that I have included here, reveal that reciprocal intentions do not always equate to reciprocal practices, and that reciprocal practices do not always facilitate reciprocal relationships.

In *Chapter 5*, I outlined the five qualities of dualistic practice as described by Plumwood (1993), and illustrated how these qualities were evident in the culturally shaped parenting practice of sleep training infants and toddlers. The practice of sleep training infants revealed that parenting practice also harbours threads of oppressive dualistic logic, and represents one of the many different ways in which the next generation of people may embody ideologies of mastery, abstract reasoning, rationalism, and dualistic oppression. It is from this initial awaking that I begin to question the underlying fabric of our relational reality, to seek clarity about what can make relationships oppressively dualistic, and to consider ways in which to heal them and forge new reciprocal relationships.

This particular chapter was written early in my PhD process, and written from the simple perspective that dualisms of oppression are ‘bad’ for everything and everyone

and should be rejected. Whereas their alternatives or extreme opposites, such as purely reciprocal relationships, are ‘good’ and welcomed. Such an assumption is perhaps a reflection of my ignorance or lack of awareness of the profound complexity of worldly relationships. I viewed the world through a polarised and rational lens as a set of ideals and pure definable phenomena to be either rejected or adopted.

For instance, I argued that sleep training and its underlying dualistic logic were oppressive and therefore unwanted in an ideal relational world, and proposed that practices such as bed-sharing were a more respectful and mutual solution to the ‘problem of infant sleep’. The ease with which dualisms and their opponents could be defined - in terms of good and bad - started to unravel when I questioned paradoxical situations where oppressive treatments may seem to be the most relationally viable option in certain contexts. For instance, in situations where parents are suffering extreme sleep deprivation, sleep training may be viewed as the only practical means of preventing even more extreme physical or relational damage to both parent and child.

While I still maintain that the cultural phenomenon of routine sleep training is steeped in a complex history of dualistic logic and mastery, I have become open to the possibility that oppression may not always be avoidable in certain relational contexts. This analysis highlighted that there may be no perfect world devoid of dualism, and that my understanding of relationships need not exclude one perceived ‘type’ (like dualism) for another. It may even be possible that the tension of oppressive relationships can act as a catalyst for the formation of more reciprocal ones (as is also theorised about the evolution of mutualistic gut bacteria), and that

such relationships are spatio-temporally complex and dynamic, rather than easily and statically definable.

After identifying dualistic logic in sleep training practice, I began to wonder when control over an other – an other who requires guidance and care - was not oppressively dualistic. In *Chapter 6*, I analysed concepts of self and other, leadership, and solidarity to create a greater understanding of how to care for interdependent others without falling to the extreme ends of permissiveness or authoritarianism. I concluded, in line with Plumwood (1991; 1993; 2002), that the differences between self and other are significant to their relational potential, and therefore valuable in their own right. Self should not need to be merged with other to be able to form reciprocal relationships. Self, as a centre of subjectivity, is a critical player in connective relationships. Equally, self-interested barriers help to maintain the connective and reciprocating nature of relationships by preventing one part from damaging the other – knowingly or not - and by reinforcing the core attachment of the relational participants. Expressing and enforcing relational limits is but one of many means of creating relational dialogue.

I also explored leadership and solidarity as examples of caregiver power that are usually not oppressive. Plumwood (1991; 2002) and Scholz (2008; 2013) argue that participants of unequal power can unite over common causes and in solidarity. As such, a stronger leader may make decisions which are not democratic, but that support the common cause. Valuing one's own existence (and connection to others) can be seen as a common cause, and so actions to preserve that existence (such as to restrain Evelyn against her will when around car traffic), were not oppressive, but supportive of a shared cause and of the relationship as a whole. Indeed, as Plumwood

(1991; 1993; 2002) argues, standing with another in solidarity need not negate the differences of individual selves nor entail fear and avoidance of the suffering caused by attachment to significant others. Standing in solidarity with another does not imply that self or others conform to relational ideals, because conflict, discontent, and tension can lead to greater relational understandings and practices, especially when reflexively engaged. In these moments, the lines between instrumentalism and leadership, and between solidarity and oppression, can blur and shift.

In *Chapter 7*, I delved more deeply into the fabric of relational encounter to consider the ethical frameworks that guide relationality. I broadly considered closed-ended moral codes and open-ended ethics, linking closed-ended morality, such as decontextualized and objective rules for living and interacting, to dualistic logic and rationalism, and open-ended ethics to the dialogical and metaphysical philosophies of Plumwood, Mathews, and Rose. I discussed Boyce (2014) and Mathew's (2003) theories about how closed-ended moral codes were evident in the Christian story of creation, which has deeply influenced western cultures of domination. Judgement, such as forms of punishment and shaming or rewarding and praising, were the primary means of upholding these moral codes and of maintaining a relatively 'safe' and stable social order (Mathews, 2003).

Initially, I assumed that all judgement was oppressively dualistic – to take the perspective and will of one being or group and apply it universally to rate, rank and regulate others. While actively and outwardly judging others may turn into oppression and deny the subjectivity and value of others, internal forms of judgement can also be an important part of more reciprocal forms of relationality. Reflecting upon the parenting situations when I hurt Evelyn, I judged my actions against my

internal ethic of care for Evelyn, which mustered feelings of guilt. Such powerful guilt motivated me to find ways to prevent such hurtful actions in the future.

I concluded that open-ended ethics develop through experience, reflexivity, including self-judgement or guilt, and empathetic guidance from others. While open-ended ethics are more socially risky than rule-based morals, they allow individuals to more fluidly relate to others in light of multiple subjectivities and contexts (Mathews, 2003). Based on these understandings, questioning the assumptions and norms of self and other (Why do I think X? Why do others think X? Why do I value X? and so on) is an important means of unveiling hidden ethical or moral frameworks and their embedded power structures.

In this chapter, I proposed that setting ‘empathetic limits’ may be one way in which parents could move beyond outwardly judgemental 'reward and punishment' methods of communicating and enforcing relational boundaries. My experience of learning how to set empathetic limits with Evelyn revealed the importance of moving beyond merely following logical instructions to achieve a perfected ‘success’, but to embrace and navigate the difficult and confrontational aspects of relational life.

In the story that I analysed, I wanted to stop Evelyn drawing on the floor, while also validating her perspective and emotional reactions to the limit. I found it difficult at times to understand her experience and what she was feeling, while trying to suppress my own anxieties about if I was ‘doing it right’. Indeed, I assumed that my practice of setting empathetic limits would make such relational work easier, in that my validation of her experience would help her to accept the limit, calm down faster, and move on. I later reflected that the relational value of such empathetic limit setting was in maintaining connection through struggle. Maintaining connection was

supported by upholding dialogical and thoughtful boundaries which ensured the mental and physical safety of self and others. By welcoming and accepting her feelings, the encounter was not personally adversarial or oppressive, but an event of coming to understand one another and our unique boundaries and connections. I understood that developing and embodying the nuances of such practices took time - time to reflexively understand relationships in the present and to move past the training and assumptions created by past experiences.

In *Chapter 8*, my analysis of panpsychism helped me to understand whom we value as kin and worthy of ethical consideration. Mathews (2003) describes panpsychism as a fundamental physic, mind-like, or consciousness quality of the universe and its matter. Plumwood (1991; 1993; 2002) indicated that if all matter is conscious, then an inclusive ethic is warranted. In line with Andrews (1998), I argue that panpsychism does not mandate an inclusive ethic, nor does it provide a means of living such an ethic. Individuals must judge what relationships are important to their own interests, and so allocate time and energy to understanding those core relationships. Therefore, value and moral hierarchies (often considered a feature of oppressive dualisms) are not necessarily dualistic, but are essential for discerning what and who is most important in a diverse and complex world.

As I reflect, I do not and cannot apply the same ethical position to my daughter as I do to my lentils – I cannot be inclusive of all conscious entities. My connection to and relationship with my daughter is many times more valuable to me and my well-being than is my relationship to the lentils. Furthermore, it is not physically possible to give every being in my world, if it is even possible to know all these beings, enough time and attention to form a unique understanding and ethical approach to

each one. I am not able to understand the subjectivity or consciousness of the lentils because they are so very different from me, whereas my daughter is very much like me - we communicate, sense, and understand in comparatively similar ways. Therefore, the depth of our relationship is greater and more significant to the both of us, and thus the relational frameworks that I have evolved to relate to my daughter are privileged. I need to judge and rank the importance and value of different kin so that I can allocate my time for engagement to those most critical in my own well-being. Judgement and the creation of moral hierarchies, as in internal reasoning, helps individuals to determine which kin to keep close, and which kin to let be (Mathews, 2003).

Plumwood also states that the subjectivities of others should be valued in their own right, but as Rose demonstrates with Aboriginal examples (Rose, 2002; 2005; 2011), respect for significant others need not require an understanding of their subjectivity, as this may not even be possible. Rather, respect entails responsiveness and experience with others which is purposeful and situationally located in landscapes, amongst other things, and distributed through time and space.

Therefore, the value of panpsychism is not to justify a call for an inclusive ethic or universal understandings of respect, but to open our eyes to relational *possibilities*. If the world is composed of infinitely complex manifestations of consciousness, even if we only believe that it is that way regardless of 'hard' proof, such thinking opens our ontological and epistemological approach towards others. It requires us to be ontologically and epistemologically open, to understand context, to be active and engaged in relationships, and to acknowledge that there are many others (seen and unseen) who are also active in relationships that touch us.

Through my analysis, I came to the conclusion that panpsychism does not happen merely by believing in a form of universal consciousness. It requires that one is aware, mindful, embedded, and engaged with those whom supports one and those whom one, in-turn, supports. As such, the bridge between relational theory and practice is *engagement*. Not just as a visitation with others, but as a deep engagement where we can *feel* - emotionally, spiritually, and physically - our interdependence with certain others. Such engagement also requires us to be reflexive, such as to question ourselves and others, so as to continually grow our relational understandings through changing contexts, and to help us move beyond damaging and dysfunctional ways of being. As Mathews (2003) explains, the kind of engagement which fosters a dialogical relationality, much like panpsychism, is felt as much as, if not more, than 'known' or communicated:

> We are not interested in explaining why they are as they are, but rather in engaging with them as they are. We seek to make contact with the self that they know, the self as they experience it – the subjective aspect of their being – rather than with aspects of the self that are outside their experience, such as synapses and neural pathways and unconscious behaviour patterns. When such contact with the self as they experience it – as subject – is made, and they communicate to us something of the meanings they have for them-selves, we do in fact share a deep sense of mutual knowing, but this is a felt form of knowing, only secondarily translatable into information (Mathews, 2003, p.78).

My parenting experiences, and subsequent analysis, revealed to me that relational understandings, such as of dualisms, are much more complicated and challenging in practice. As such, it is deep reflexive engagement that can bridge the gap between ideals of relationality and dynamic, dialogical, and evolving relational practices. If

panpsychism calls us to be open to relational opportunities with all matter, then the depth of ones engagement with matter is critical for uncovering new relational opportunities and of recognising extant relationships which, may be hidden or taken-for-granted, but still support our lives.

9.1.2 Reflexive Engagement

The main aim for a praxis of environmental theories need not simply be to *apply* and *achieve* them, but rather to *interpret* and *try* them. Adopting such an approach can reveal new questions, insights, and assumptions about the world, thereby leading to more novel and dynamic theories and practices including, in this instance, those of relationality. Heidegger (1927/1962) theorised that equipment is more than static and isolated objects, but the complex totality of human intention and agency, the equipment's connections with other systems, beings, and tools, and its technological and material qualities. In order to understand equipment and its place in the world, Heidegger considered equipment as an experience, and thus to understand the experience of equipment, one had to be reflexive about their engagement with equipment (Heidegger, 1927/1962; see also Harnesk and Thapa, 2016).

Reflexivity is a fundamental component of engagement because it critically examines self-awareness and moderates the changes that take place during engagement. The process of engagement creates a constant feedback loop among those beings and materials involved in it, and this continuous, reflexive process guides the direction and meaning of the experience. Of course, the depth and shape of the reflexivity can vary greatly between individuals and in different contexts, and

thus the power of reflexivity to create new languages for connecting with others is as diverse as the individuals themselves.

Reflexivity takes place within individual selves, and so phenomena and concepts of the self are also crucial to relational engagement. When we become aware of the particular qualities of our own subjectivity, our self, as both permeable with all other selves, yet also a distinct centre, then we can appreciate others *as they are* and the meanings they may place on their own encounters (Mathews, 2003). In other words, to engage fully within a world of relationality, we must not neglect the role of the self, especially the reflexive self, in motivating and mediating engagement with others. The active dialogue of self and other drives internal developments, and internal developments then cycle back to moderate the interactions of self and others.

In my previous analyses, relational ethics have been described in terms of respect for otherness (Mathews, 2005; 2008; Plumwood, 1991; 1993), and 'letting be', such as when one accepts processes of relationality rather than abstractedly managing them (Mathews, 2005; Rose, 1992). Likewise, it involves discerning ones position in relation to others through a responsive dialogue (Rose, 2002; 2005; Plumwood, 1993), and a responsibility to openly consider the possibility of relationships with all others (Rose, 1992; 2002; Mathews, 2005; Plumwood, 1993). Reflexive engagement may be a significant part of fostering these kinds of internalised open-ended ethical positions in individuals.

Mathews (2008) proposes that to facilitate an ethic which entails sensitivity for others, the individuals involved need to engage *synergistically*:

> Synergy was defined earlier as any form of intentional interactivity between two or more parties who engage with each other in such a way that something new and larger

> than either of them, but true to the inner principle of each, is created. Synergy then provides new and larger opportunities for the expression of the inner principle of both parties (Mathews, 2008, p.50).

Synergy encompasses active engagement between relational participants, which is transformative and creative, yet also speaks to the inner qualities and self-interests of the individuals. The development of a relational ethic through such synergistic engagement may not always be pleasant, but it will be sensitive to and reflective of the dynamic between self and other in the context of the moment (Mathews, 2003). As Rose (2002) describes, a dialogical ethic is a *responsibility* to be open and responsive with others. As such, the ethic is not to uphold particular moral rules, but to be engaged in the moment and context of the relationship.

I suggest that *play* is one such form of synergistic engagement that can be manifest in parenting practice. Parents may have a great deal of sway in the way children play in the world, such as by creating or allowing opportunities for play, creating or moderating the landscapes of play, and through supporting different ontologies and epistemologies through and about play.

Shields (2015) implores us to move beyond the materialistic views of play of late modernity, where this activity is understood as physical events of cultural and social origin. Instead, play should be considered as a more fundamental force of the universe, shaping the subjective ontological position of the individual. In her argument, Shields (2015) frames play as a force which opens up new worlds of being, and new means of expressing those experiences, such as with new languages. Playfulness is not just a personal quality or behaviour, but rather can be a position

toward the world that challenges and rebels against the status quo. She concludes that *play is consciousness*:

> Consciousness, in this view, is play at it its most basic level—we have no real control over it, it is fluid, shifting, multilayered, mysterious, pleasurable, whirling, overwhelming. It is not real in the sense that it is one order removed from the material world and thus from interaction. Every sensory input is first filtered through, or produced by, the brain at the cellular level and then reproduced in the form of conscious thought (Shields, 2015, p.306).

While Shield's take on consciousness is largely focused on the physical happenings within the brain, this connection between consciousness and play draws in my previous analysis of panpsychism – of a unity of mind and matter. Play can then be viewed as a very specific and active way of experiencing a world of fundamental consciousness – or rather, panpsychism may describe a world of *playing matter*. It is the action of openly engaging in play that builds understandings of others and opens up opportunities for relationships among human and non-human selves and others. Similarly, postmodern and other theoretical discourses, such as those pertaining to environmental ethics in this thesis, also 'play', in the sense that texts, meanings, and ideas connect and engage with one another to create something greater than themselves. Play, and its many forms, theories, understandings, and applications warrants further exploration and research.

9.1.3 Love and Anxiety

As I come to the end of this thesis I ponder a very basic, yet fundamental question: why would environmental scholars or parents care about relationality with others, or

even be motivated to engage and grow relationally? Why did I want to parent respectfully, and why do I care enough to want to write a PhD thesis about it? When I reflect upon my motivations for exploring relationality, I feel underpinning *love* accompanied by *anxiety*. I love Evelyn and so want to treat her with respect, and likewise I feel sentimental attachment to and interest in the non-human world. A motivation to engage with these beings originates from my love of them, as well as my concern for them. It would be logical to assume that many environmental scholars are also motivated to create and communicate their work by an underlying love and concern for non-human worlds.

Love is an integral part of our bond with others which provokes us to protect and connect with them, as we come to understand the ways in which their lives are integral to our own. Such love for another can also come with the burden of anxiety. We worry about their well-being, our connection to them, and therefore worry about our collective well-being. As previously discussed, Immergut and Kaufman (2014) argue that feeling anxiety about another is symptomatic of a dualistic mentality, as self cannot be defined without the duality of the other. They go on to propose the concept of 'no-self', criticised by Plumwood (1993) as yet another extreme reaction to dualism which neglects the diversity and subjectivity of entities and their experiences. I also argue that the anxious-self need not be dualistic, and that anxiety can motivate connection, care, and responsibility for others, as it can do in parenting.

Love and anxiety have their place in both environmental and parenting discourses alike. It is no surprise that Plumwood, Mathews, and Rose have all described the fundamental place of love in their work and indeed in their own lives. As Plumwood (1991) describes the role of love and care for others in webs of relationality:

> With nature, as with the human sphere, the capacity to care, to experience sympathy, understanding, and sensitivity to the situation and fate of particular others, and to take responsibility for others is an index of our moral being. Special relationship with, care for, or empathy with particular aspects of nature as experiences rather than with nature as abstraction are essential to provide a depth and type of concern that is not otherwise possible. Care and responsibility for particular animals, trees, and rivers that are known well, loved, and appropriately connected to the self are an important basis for acquiring a wider, more generalized concern (Plumwood, 1991, p. 7).

Mathews (2003) describes love as a process of coming to know one's self through the struggles and dialogues that arises from enmeshment within the life of another. When we know ourselves, as a result of knowing another, engagement may endure through their awareness of connection and the thrill of possibility that comes with openness. Indeed, as she alludes, such attachment cannot be guaranteed, and thus there always lingers an anxiety of loss of the other:

> What happens when we fall in love? We become permeable to another subjectivity. Our own subjectivity is cracked open by contact with an other, or even by the prospect of such contact. […] It is arguably only when we fall in love that we are inducted into the essence of the life experience, if this essence is understood as a function of participation in an infinitely responsive, infinitely animate world. […] When our world is beloved, which is to say, when we are erotically engaged with world via its local modality of land or place, then the state of being-in-love is relatively enduring, for world necessarily retains its unknowability, its inexhaustibility, its mystery. Once opened to its subjectivity, we remain open – permeable, transmutable, alive to the call of life. On the other hand, while world as our beloved may never be *encompassed* [original emphasis], it can be lost (Mathews, 2003, p. 19).

Rose (2002) describes love as an integral part of connection with others, and of being situated in the world. Love is something that is strengthened by engagement, and such love is extended to non-humans and landscapes as a matter of course and permeation in a place:

> The country "gets under the skin" or "gets into the blood"; people become "married to" their country. This is the language of kinship: of flesh and blood, love and marriage. It is a language of emplacement: of keeping your body in the place, and putting your labour into the place, of learning to know the place, and of being available to the place. It is, thus, a language of permeability: the dust gets up your nose and into the crevices of your skin, it mingles with your sweat and personalises your hat band even as your own fluids wash into the ground (Rose, 2002, p. 313).

The felt experience of love feeds into our judgements of whom we value and why. To love someone can be both a manifestation of physiological states of the body (such as the hormones that flow through a mother's body and drive her to bond with her baby) and of long and meaningful engagement (love can deepen and mature as we spend time with others). In this way, love and anxiety are cyclic and flowing. We engage with others because we love them, and because we love them we are motivated to keep engaging with them. Equally, we worry about those we love because their well-being touches us, and yet as love evolves through time, we sometimes have to let go of our worry and acknowledge that others are also agents in the world, and have their own struggles to face for which we are not responsible. We can grow love when we intimately engage with others, and we are motivated to continue engaging and improve our relationships because we are able to love and care.

Parenting is an obvious praxis of feeling love and anxiety for another – sometimes parenting is overwhelming in this aspect. Love is expressed and received in infinitely complex ways, from helping our children with their everyday care, to physical closeness and emotional support. Indeed, sometimes the intense feeling of love between parent and child can be felt before birth.

It is imperative, then, to consider the *conditionality* of love. In authoritarian and behaviourist parenting traditions discussed throughout this thesis, love is used as a conditional currency – as praise or punishment to manipulate children's external behaviour. Kohn (2005) describes the currency of love in parenting:

> In our society, we are taught that good things must always be earned, never given away. […] Ultimately, conditional parenting reflects a tendency to see almost every human interaction, even among family members, as a kind of economic transaction. The laws of the marketplace – supply and demand, tit for tat – have assumed the status of universal and absolute principles, as though everything in our lives, including what we do with our children, is analogous to buying a car or renting an apartment. […] Even many writers and therapists who don't address the issue explicitly nevertheless seem to rely on some sort of economic model. If we read between the lines, their advice appears to be based on the belief that when children don't act the way we want, the things they like ought to be withheld from them. After all, people shouldn't get something for nothing. Not even happiness. Or love (Kohn, 2005, p. 23).

To love another without conditions is important in underpinning dialogical forms of parenting, because the very basis of a dialogical ethic is the acceptance of others, as they are, as unique centres of subjectivity. From this position, we engage with others, not to change them to conform to our version of the world, but to grow *with them* in an infinitely complex and diverse universe.

Acceptance and knowledge of *self* is critical to knowing one's self as a situated and relational being. To reflect upon one's self, one's perceptions, one's actions, and one's boundaries (to protect self), is to question and understand where self fits with other, and to know why other is important to self (or not) and so strengthen relational connections. As discussed, Plumwood (1993) argues for the importance of self (in theory and practice) and of acknowledging the infinitely diverse versions of self which perpetuate the universe. However, when love is conditional on pleasing the other, then a fragile 'false-self' develops. As Kohn (2005) describes:

> That, in turn, may lead a given adolescent to construct a "false-self" – in other words, to pretend to be the kind of person whom his or her parents *will* love. This desperate strategy to gain acceptance is often associated with depression, a sense of hopelessness, and a tendency to lose touch with one's true self. At some point, such teenagers may not even know who they really are because they've had to work so hard to become something they're not (Kohn, 2005, p.23).

If love is conditional, and we lose sight of a *genuine* sense of self and of other selves, then our connections to others may also be flimsy and uncertain, because 'common ground' may also be non-genuine. The conditionality of love appears to be a very complex dynamic, and so it may be valuable to consider its significance through further experiential study within the context of relational environmental scholarship.

9.2 Conclusion

To directly address my research question, this thesis contributes to relational environmental scholarship in several ways. It demonstrates that the relational

philosophies and ethics of Mathews, Plumwood, and Rose can be applied to (my) parenting practice. Exploring the dynamics of such intimate and personal relationships among and between individual people may help people to understand our relationships with more-than-human others. This research argues that the cultures, values, and ethical frameworks that are deemed influential for relationships categorised as environmental, are not just isolated between people and non-humans – after all, 'environment' is just a conceptual boundary between people and non-people. The ways in which we love and care for our children, and love and care for all others, including non-humans, are continuous and connected. All relationships are messily tangled and colour each other in vastly complex and incomprehensible ways.

As I have suggested, the formative relationships we have in childhood likely provide profound relational scaffolds that underpin other relationships, human or non-human, which touch our lives. Childhood is the time in our lives when we are vulnerable to others, yet also open to being enmeshed within the world. Therefore, parenting relationships are very relevant to relational environmental scholarship, as well as many other ontologically focused causes. Parenting reveals a potential praxis for relational theory, but also suggests an arena where relational theories may be experienced, reflected upon, and evolved.

Much like this thesis, research that examines the *experience* of interpreting relational environmental scholarship and applying it to life may help to further bridge the gap between theory and praxis. Such relational work may provide a certain questioning path for growth, rather than philosophical end-state ideals. While I privilege the philosophies of Rose, Mathews, and Plumwood, their ideas do not constitute any final goal, but are inspirational fodder for questioning my own relational world. This

process has impressed upon me the need to remain open to relational possibility, to question rules for living and assumptions about our place amongst others, to accept that no process, relationship, being, or concept will be perfect or ideal in practice, and to consider relational encounters individually and dialogically. Environmental philosophy and ethics can inform practical relationships, such as parenting practice, and make some long-term strides in addressing the human-driven destruction of ourselves and others. Parenting practice, informed by ideas of relationality, may foster the abilities of future generations to question and reflect upon their relationships of care, and thus evolve and refine their ethics and practices of relating to others and pass such knowledge on.

Their voices were heard! They rang out clear and clean. And the elephant smiled. "Do you see what I mean?... They've proved they ARE persons, no matter how small. ***And their whole world was saved by the Smallest of All!****"*

(Seuss, 1954, p. 58)

Figure 8 - Evelyn, now (2017) 4 years old, with her goats. Photo credit: Kaseen Cook

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Ethics Approval

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HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (TASMANIA) NETWORK

10 April 2014

Dr Stewart Williams
Geography and Environmental Studies
Private Bag 78

Student Researcher: Kaseen Cook

Sent via email

Dear Dr Williams

Re: MINIMAL RISK ETHICS APPLICATION APPROVAL
Ethics Ref: **H0013918 - Understanding Interdependent Socio-ecological Relationships through an Autoethnography of Mothering**

We are pleased to advise that acting on a mandate from the Tasmania Social Sciences HREC, the Chair of the committee considered and approved the above project on 7 April 2014.

This approval constitutes ethical clearance by the Tasmania Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee. The decision and authority to commence the associated research may be dependent on factors beyond the remit of the ethics review process. For example, your research may need ethics clearance from other organisations or review by your research governance coordinator or Head of Department. It is your responsibility to find out if the approval of other bodies or authorities is required. It is recommended that the proposed research should not commence until you have satisfied these requirements.

Please note that this approval is for four years and is conditional upon receipt of an annual Progress Report. Ethics approval for this project will lapse if a Progress Report is not submitted.

The following conditions apply to this approval. Failure to abide by these conditions may result in suspension or discontinuation of approval.

1. It is the responsibility of the Chief Investigator to ensure that all investigators are aware of the terms of approval, to ensure the project is conducted as approved by the Ethics Committee, and to notify the Committee if any investigators are added to, or cease involvement with, the project.

2. Complaints: If any complaints are received or ethical issues arise during the course of the project, investigators should advise the Executive Officer of the Ethics Committee on 03 6226 7479 or human.ethics@utas.edu.au.

3. Incidents or adverse effects: Investigators should notify the Ethics Committee immediately of any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants or unforeseen events affecting the ethical acceptability of the project.

4. Amendments to Project: Modifications to the project must not proceed until approval is obtained from the Ethics Committee. Please submit an Amendment Form (available on our website) to notify the Ethics Committee of the proposed modifications.

5. Annual Report: Continued approval for this project is dependent on the submission of a Progress Report by the anniversary date of your approval. You will be sent a courtesy reminder closer to this date. **Failure to submit a Progress Report will mean that ethics approval for this project will lapse.**

6. Final Report: A Final Report and a copy of any published material arising from the project, either in full or abstract, must be provided at the end of the project.

Yours sincerely

Katherine Shaw
Executive Officer
Tasmania Social Sciences HREC